KEEPING YOUR PROMISE: EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BE INVOLED IN THE LIFE OF THEIR CHILD AND SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

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The context of this project is Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School in Indianapolis, IN. The hypothesis of this project is if parents get involved in the life of their child then their child's grades and scores will improve. The treatment used to test the hypothesis was a qualitative research analysis of a focus group with discussion, notation, survey, video recording and exit interview. The pre-test survey revealed parents did not understand covenant. As a result of the focus group parents gain a better understanding of covenant and increased there participation in the life of their child and school.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the parents, students, teachers and administrators of the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School, thank you so much for your support, diligence, encouragement and love you have exhibited. The commitment you made to the Tindley School has brought about a school atmosphere of hard work and dedication that is second to none in the State of Indiana. Congratulations on the future accomplishments to come to the Tindley family.

To the many young people whom I have had the opportunity to Pastor over the last ten years, thank you for the motivation you have provided for me to continue to show how much God can do with so little. All of you are heroes/heroines and would not trade meeting and knowing you for anything. Be blessed.

Thanks to Pastor Frank Alexander and staff of Oasis of Hope Baptist Church; especially to LaShanda Rorie. Thank you, Siri Loescher, Kathy Holmes, Nickola Baker, Kim Williams and Maurice Woodson.

Special thanks Rosalie Pettigrew for stepping in and stepping up to make sure this document was completed. I am so grateful for your contribution at this point in my journey.

To those I have not named; but helped to cultivate my thinking and strengthen my position thank you and I am so grateful. May God bless you.

DEDICATIONS

This projected is dedicated to the Master Teacher, Jesus the Christ. I am nothing outside of Your will and Your Way. Thank you, Lord for consecrating the experience to be authentically mine. To my Granny, Edna Wallace Collins (deceased), who raised me and taught me how to survive. I always knew you were behind the seen taking care of Rodney and I. I Love you and I miss you. Oh yea, It's my deal. To my Aunt, Oleva Green (deceased), you taught me how love the "hell" out of people. I always knew that you were in my corner. Thank you so much for the many life talks. To my mother, you have more times than not made me proud to be your son. You taught me how to work hard for whatever I get out of life. Thank you for showing me how to make lemonade out of lemons. To the rest of my family, I hope you share in this historical act in our family. Truly you know how to take punches and keep on rolling.

I dedicate this journey to every parent who has decided their child is more important than things that make them happy. To the single fathers, who have not deserted your children but have embraced the role and responsibility of raising young men who give respect and young women who are respectable. Single moms, you are fantastic. To Pastor Frank Alexander and Oasis of Hope Baptist Church Family, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the ways you have encouraged and supported my self and my ministry over the years.

To my children, Khristian, Ramon, II, Christopher and Kennedy, thank you for understanding how important education is in your life and mine. All 4 of you are smart

and intelligent and there is NO THING you cannot accomplish. Please, remember to work as hard as you can in whatever you do.

And to my best friend, Sharifa, who have been the biggest cheerleader I have ever seen through out this whole process. You hung in there while I was away for those long weeks and I appreciate all the love you haven given. Thank you for marrying me and thank you for growing with me.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a working model which encourages social justice and political activism in students, parents, and teachers. Taking a closer look at the biblical, historical, and theological foundations, this writer hopes to extend through each foundation, covenant keeping as a means to sharing social justice and political activism in a public school venue. The Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School, an early preparatory college school, whose population is 98% black will serve as the ministry context.

Public schools are the largest public institution in the United States. On the average school day, approximately fifty million children attend kindergarten through grade twelve, about one-fifth of all our citizens, are in school. At a time when education is the buzz word in political campaigns and budget discussions from the federal government to state legislative houses and into local communities, it is appropriate for people of faith to take a serious look at public education. Despite a variety of alternatives being discussed and promoted, the vast majority of children in the United States will, in the near future, find themselves in a public school. If the citizens of the United States believe with some of our founding fathers that education is the foundation of a democratic society, then the question arises as to what we want the future citizens of that society to know and what obligations the total society has to prepare children for their future—our future and an even greater concern is their present.

Public schools are expected and required by law to educate all children in the community, regardless of family background, economic status, or other elements of diversity. Many parents and communities look to schools to produce moral, thinking adults without examining the wider culture in which the children live. Children who come to school stressed by conditions at home--such as poverty, abuse, neglect, family insecurity, or over-worked parents--are unable to give full concentration to lessons. Children are vulnerable to the things that stress their parents. Parents dealing with their own exhaustion and stress often make teachers and schools scapegoats for their children's failures.

Parenting can be one of the most difficult and vexing ventures, on the other hand, it can be the most rewarding and fulfilling things human beings can ever do. God has a great deal to say about how the human race can successfully raise its children to be Godly individuals. Although children learn a great deal through direct teaching, they learn more by watching adults. This leads to the understanding of having to be careful about what is done or said in the presence of said children. It is the belief of this writer that one of the lost arts of families is defining roles; not just for the adults, but defining roles for the children as well. Defined roles help families to bond and are productive. The writer believes young people function better when they know exactly where and how they fit in the family structure and what is expected of them.

The Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School sees students on a daily basis whose parents drop them off and are not seen until the end of the school day when students are being picked up to go home. Some individuals would acknowledge that parents today have a tough assignment as opposed to parents dating back more than 30 to 50 years ago.

A parent's mission is to provide for their children's physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual well-being for most of the first two decades of a child's life. In the process parent's will be forced to deal with peer influences, music , television movies, the drug culture, the Internet and the child's own developmental stages.

A universal need for all children to grow into secure, self-confident adults is to know they are loved. Love can be expressed in trust, care, delight, and freedom to develop as a person in healthy and forgiving relationships. Love is a catch-all institution. Love is said, but best of all, love is done. Young people today are not looking for someone to say I love you; rather, these young people are looking at what is done to say "I love you." Parents may fall guilty of not saying how much they love their child, but the child should readily see what the parents are doing to show these young people they are loved.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The focus of this ministry, as mentioned above, is Social Justice and Political Activism. While education continues to be a hot topic among communities and politicians, not enough is being done to ensure that students, families, teachers and administrators acquire everything they need to be successful. This is especially true among urban neighborhood schools. The writer contends that education makes the world go 'round. As school systems work hard to save their students and schools, the government continues to offer up empty promises. President George W. Bush instituted the *No Child Left Behind Act(NCLB)*, which was designed to improve the overall quality of schools. NCLB seeks to mitigate and ultimately remove any disparities between various groups in the public sector. These disparities have contributed to the nationwide achievement gap that has produced many societal ills, such as welfare, uninsured children, and unemployment. Many schools discovered that this program did not meet the needs as promised. Most students do not have an advocate who can consistently address their most pertinent issues in education. This, however, is where the writer is expressing focus through activism. The writer defines activism as seeing an injustice and becoming an agent of change to right the wrong. Students feel the gravity of pressure both in and out of the classroom. Many opportunities exist for them to give up and drop out of school. They are exposed to gangs, drugs, illegal means of earning income, and

often, they have few reasons to solicit help. Perhaps there are more questions than answers. How can society better equip students to be productive members of society? How can there be no early interventions or indicators of this potential danger? The writer's opinion is that parents of troubled students lacked the necessary motivation and interest required to promote good behavior. It is the writer's hope that through this study parents will find that their involvement is both critical and necessary. The writer desires that administrators, teachers, parents and students be armed with the necessary information to defeat outside influences that seek to destroy a students' opportunity to be academically successful.

Spiritual Autobiography

In The Beginning

It was a cold winter morning when the writer was born. On January 9, 1972, the writer entered world, as the first child of Debra Batts (now Beard), 16, and [redacted], 17. Neither parent attended church. The writer did not have a relationship with his father because his father was incarcerated for murder; in fact, the writer did not meet his father until the age of twelve.

Although attending church was rare, by age 11, the writer had a spiritual awareness developed by older aunts and uncles who took him to church whenever he asked to attend. As a result of this spiritual awakening, the writer gave his life to Christ and was baptized at age twelve at College Avenue Baptist Church (renamed Oasis of Hope Baptist Church) under the leadership of Pastor Frank Alexander.

Prior to giving his life to Christ, there were pivotal moments which helped to shape the writer's existence. The writer recalls uncertain moments when he had to live relatives. One such example was with an older aunt, Mae Susan, who cared for him when his mother wasn't in the position to look after his welfare. While it was comforting to have someone stand in the gap, the writer experienced great anxiety in her home. The writer did not experience the nurturing and concern that he so deeply yearned for. He realized that this house was not home; rather, he was a guest. Although his aunt had the best of intentions, he was filled with uncertainty. Not only did he have to deal with separation from his mother, but there was a constant disconnection from his absent father. Society deemed this type of individual as "at risk" and not likely to be successful. As a result of God's infinite power and blessings, his success would not be limited or overshadowed by his personal shortcomings. God used this difficult time to plant perseverance, grow understand, and heighten spiritual awareness. Events such as these became fertile ground for God to deposit worthwhile and much-needed seeds.

The Preacher Within

During his time at Oasis of Hope Church, the writer wrestled with his call to ministry. He never shared with anyone his desire to become a minister; yet there continued to be a calling within his soul. The writer's first congregation was actually a group of friends in the Indianapolis neighborhood often referred to as "The Meadows." The Meadows, an impoverished area likened to the set of *Good Times* (a 1970s syndicated comedy), was a popular "hang out" during the day, but was notoriously dangerous during the night. The group of friends he would hang out with were not church

goers, but the writer would consistently invite them to attend church with him. After several invitations, his friends began calling him "Preacher Man." This title was music to his ears. Oasis of Hope Baptist Church afforded the writer the opportunity to hear several great preachers who were, or became, household names around the country; such as Fredrick Haynes, Jeffrey Johnson, the late E. K. Bailey, Andrew J. Brown, and Frank Reid. These men of God catapulted the writer's desire to join the great ranks of the preaching ministry. As a result of this exposure, there were styles and voices (pitch and tone) he tried to imitate for his friends. One day, the writer and his friends were playing behind one of the apartment buildings, and he began to repeat their words in a "preacher" tone of voice. It became something the writer and his friends looked forward to doing and, day by day, the writer inched closer to God. Seeking to have a relationship with God did not come without negative influences and remarks. However, God continued to sustain him and instead of succumbing to the web of negativity, the writer used the negative comments to catapult him to his place of purpose. It became clear to him that the negativity came from one source: his family. The writer sought to find other positive influences that could he could model after. The writer sought out role models in school and church and recognized persons who were passionate about demonstrating their love of God. Pastor Frank Alexander provided him with much needed direction and inspiration. With a willing heart, the writer learned how to listen and adhere to advice that would not only make him a better man, but make him a better Christian. Pastor Alexander was a tower of strength who knew how to be both tough and gentle.

In an attempt to surround himself with humble and God-fearing people, the writer continued to seek other role models. Jeffrey A. Johnson, Sr., now Senior Pastor of the

Eastern Star Church of Indianapolis, Indiana, was the first youth pastor to have a positive influence in his life. Pastor Johnson expressed, through his sharing in youth meetings, how one should always measure what one does by God's word. Rev. Eugene Fisher taught him how to care for a family and how to be a walking testimony for his peers, which he believed the writer could be. Rev. Gerald Trotter deposited toughness for ministry; as the writer learned to go the direction God is leading and not where people want to take you. Rev. Kenneth Manuel became the big brother the writer needed to grow in God's word. Providing him with direction, Reverend Manuel helped him to gain understanding about his experiences in life. Many conversations with Reverend Manuel helped to shape a different cognitive process in the writer which allowed for freedom from some bondages and demons which were present in the writer's life. For his young, impressionable, and open mind, it was a refreshing blessing to have an audience with a man who exemplified care and integrity. It was this relationship which ultimately led the writer to examine himself and know with certainty that God called him into ministry. Reverend Manuel, the recipient of a phone call from a nervous and anxious college-student, heard the student (writer) saying in cracking voice, "I am ready to preach".

The Preacher Comes Out

The writer was chosen for membership into an exclusive organization, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Earlier that particular night, the writer had an intense pledging session with the elder brothers in the organization. He often pondered during those sessions about why he participated in pledge sessions. During a phone call to Reverend Manuel, he pondered again about his motives and he heard a voice say, "Do you love

God this much? You are taking all of this ridicule and punishment for people who do not love you like God does." The writer thought about the many opportunities he had to say "I was called to preach" and chose to put it on hold until he was done sinning in college. It was at this moment that he felt consumed with a spirit that allowed him to spiritually remove himself from this pledge session.

The writer returned to his room to find his roommate sound asleep. There was no one to talk to so he got ready for bed. The writer tossed and turned; he looked at the ceiling and counted the spots. He even tried to think about sheep. He knew why he could not sleep. He felt God saying to his spirit it is time to cross over. The writer jumped down from the top bunk of his bed and went to the pay phone. He stood there looking at the change in his hand not wanting to make the call. After forty-five minutes of wrestling, he made the call to Reverend Manual and began to truly turn his life over to God.

The Preacher Being Prepared

As many human beings experience positive events in a lifetime, the same is true when it comes to negative events. It is important to share both the positive and the negative influences in life which have impacted the writer for good and bad. Because he was "green" about different environments, he felt it necessary to obtain, maintain and impress certain people—all people. It was this type of thinking and feeling which allowed him to travel down the wrong road, with the wrong people, and be in the wrong places. Such a time occurred in the fourth grade when he decided to steal from the local grocery market; he decided to steal to impress his friends. Needless to say, he was caught. The frightening moment of possibly having to be incarcerated helped to change his attitude

toward stealing. Fortunately, the writer did not have to go to the Juvenile Detention Center because the store manager knew his step-father.

The relationships and experiences the writer's mother subjected him to were horrendous. She was the victim of mental, verbal, and physical abuse in each of her relationship. The writer saw his mother punched, dragged, kicked, beaten with objects, and threatened at gun point. One of these abusers attempted to assault the writer, himself, when he told the man to remove his hands from his mother. Again, the world would say this type of lifestyle would ruin a young man and cause him to go into a life of crime. On the contrary, the writer used this display of disregard for women as fuel to achieve success both seen and unseen. Sadly the writer's brother resorted to engaging in criminal activity. He did not have the same motivation required to be a productive member of society nor the encouragement to stay on track. He chose to be involved with hard-love criminals and delinquent thugs. It was this motivation, which can be attributed to the writer's connection to the Holy Spirit, which allowed him to stay away from certain crowds.

The environment in which the writer grew up was not conducive for developing spiritual values. At one time, the writer lived in a small room with his mother, step-father, and brother, and slept between two adjoined chairs. In another home, the writer and his brother slept at the foot of his mother and step-father's bed, which brought about moments of extreme embarrassment.

Each neighborhood in which the writer lived had its own flavor; yet each neighborhood also exemplified the same reality of being poor. It was the Holy Spirit, the

writer believes, that maintained his hopes and aspirations in the midst of so much turmoil, while keeping him on track to become a minister.

The writer had aunts and uncles who always gave accolades to God. These expressions of praise came with whatever was going on in their life or in the lives of others. Out of these moments of listening came a desire to be like his aunts and uncles and their friends who attended church. The writer soon realized he had to go to church in order to be like those he so desperately tried to mimic. The writer's uncle, Lewis Henry, was one such person who helped him become involved in church. Oasis of Hope had (and continues to have) a Men's Breakfast each second Saturday. Upon learning this, the writer asked his uncle to pick him up. After making arrangements his uncle to attend the breakfast, the writer was to meet his uncle in a parking lot about three blocks from the meeting place. The writer failed to arrive on time to the parking lot because he had fallen asleep at the dining room table and lost track of time. It was almost an hour later before the writer arrived at the designated location. Surprisingly, his uncle was still waiting for the writer to arrive. Many people may have left, but his uncle did not because he was a man of his word. That essence of that lesson lasted a lifetime. Soon after, he became involved in the ministries and experiences offered in the church. The church welcomed him and treated him warmly. During this time, the writer became familiar with church, scripture, and God.

The Preacher Preparing

As can be expected, the writer's family did not have a formal education. His mother birthed him at age sixteen and his brother at age seventeen. Although his mother had two children during her tenure in high school, she still graduated from high school on time. The writer's mother attempted to pass along a thirst for education, and a desire to move up in the world. She desperately wanted her children to be successful. While she entered but never finished college, she was an inspiration to the writer. Her choice to enroll in college demonstrated to the writer that there was hope and possibility for a better life. Her silent desire to push him forward allowed the writer the opportunity to recognize the magnitude and life-altering significance of an education. Consequently education became an outlet for him. In school he realized that he possessed a "thick skin". Although the writer was teased for a number of things, he won friends over with his kindness.

His most important struggle, however, was not education but his willingness to accept Christ Jesus, walk humbly in his pre-determined path, and move on without giving up. The writer has come through many "toils and snares" and he understands there is much to come. Shaped by pain and pleasure, the writer understands that he is the product of what God can do. Sensitive to the needs of others, the writer also knows that God has made a way for him and he should give others the same opportunity through his own ministry. The writer recognizes the power of change and its ability to affect lives.

As recently as 2003, the writer endured many trials which caused him to distrust people; more specifically God's people. After the writer's marriage failed, his ability to trust others was destroyed. After having spent most of his life trusting and loving others,

it was catastrophic to have those close to him violate him in ways unimaginable. Living as a single man was difficult to understand. Working for the church should have afforded the writer a great opportunity to grow and develop into what God was calling him to be. Now, though, his desire to work for the church has to be renewed day by day. His experience at the church, like any other job, had its good days and its bad days; however, the writer is grateful for the experience and opportunity to serve God's people.

The writer is a loving father who cares deeply for his four children. Although his divorce stifled some parenting opportunities, he continues to spend quality time with his children and fosters a loving, trusting, and safe relationship with each one. His ex-wife brags to other single mothers that she does not have to worry about her children not seeing their father. Being a great father is not only what he wants to be, but it's what his heavenly father desires of him.

Charles A. Tindley School

The context is the beautiful city of Indianapolis, Indiana. Indianapolis is the twelfth largest city in the United States of America.[1] As a result of hosting the Pan-Am Games in the late 1980s, Indianapolis is known as the "Amateur Sports Capital of the World." Since then, Indianapolis has sought to draw major events to the city such as the NCAA tournament games, Women's Big Ten Tournament, and the Olympic Trials of Track and Field. Indianapolis is also known for the greatest spectacle on earth; the Indianapolis 500.

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[1] Indianapolis, IN Metro Area: IN Depth Profile, available from http://www.stats.indiana.edu/profiles/prmsa3480.html; Internet; Saturday October 29, 2005.

Indianapolis is considered a Midwestern city, yet is championed for being centrally located. Indianapolis is often characterized as "The Crossroads of America."[2] It consists of almost 1.6 million people. The city is divided into townships which have their own elected officials. These elected officials make up the City-County Council. Indianapolis has a consolidated city-county government, Unigov, which was adopted in 1970 by an act of the Indiana State Legislature.[3] The incorporation of the city's suburbs has benefited Republican Party, which held the mayor's office from 1967 until the election of Democrat Bart Peterson in 1999. Peterson has sought to further consolidate city and county governments. The proposal, dubbed Indianapolis Works, would eliminate some remaining duplication in the name of governmental efficiency. Although Indianapolis Works appears to eliminate governmental duplication at face value, opponents to the plan and political insiders within the Indianapolis metropolitan area consider the Indianapolis Works plan to be reconsolidating city and county power to the advantage of the Democratic Party, a reverse effect of the original city-county consolidation.

The 2000 census revealed that there were 322,000 households in Indianapolis (Marion County). The average household size was 2.42 people. Families made up 61% of the households in Indianapolis.[4] This figure includes both married couple families (41%) and non-traditional families (20%). Non-family households, comprised of people living

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[2] Wikipedia, available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crossroads_of_America; Internet; accessed 1 October, 2005

[3] IndyStar; available from http://www2.indystar.com/library/factfiles/ gov/unigov/unigov.html; internet; accessed 1 October 2005.

[4] Indianapolis Profile; available from http://www.stats.indiana.edu/profiles/ prmsa3480.html; internet; accessed 1 October 2005.

alone or living in households in which no one is related to the householder, made up 39% of all households in Indianapolis.

Marion County, the largest county in Indianapolis, is one of 92 counties in Indiana. The estimated population in 2004 was 863,596. This was an increase of 37 % from the 2000 census.

Indianapolis continues, to stay well below the national average in terms of academic success. 81.3% of the 502,549 people 25 years and over graduated from high school and only 25.4% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Of the 198,311 children enrolled in school, 45.5% are elementary school students with the next highest percentage being 21.4% recorded by college and graduate students. Among 16 to 19 year olds, 25% were dropouts; they were not enrolled in school and had not graduated from high school.

In Indianapolis, Marion County in particular, among people at least five years old in 2000, 17 % reported a disability. The likelihood of having a disability varied by age - from 9 % of people 5 to 20 years old, to 16 % of people 21 to 64 years old, and to 44% of those 65 and older.

For the employed population 16 years and older, the leading industries in Indianapolis, Marion County were education, health, and social services at 19%, and retail trade at 14%. Among the most common occupations were: management, professional, and related occupations, 32%; sales and office occupations, 29%; production, transportation, and material moving occupations, 15%; service occupations, 15 %; and construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations, 9%. The vast majority, 83%, employed was private wage and salary workers; 12% were Federal, state, or local government workers; and 5% were self-employed.

82% of Indianapolis, Marion County, workers drove to work alone in 2000. 10 % carpooled, 2 % took public transportation, and 4 % used other means. The remaining 2% worked at home. Among those who commuted to work, it took them on average twenty-two minutes to get to work.

The median income of households in Indianapolis, Marion County was $41,137.[5] 86% of the households received earnings and 16% received retirement income other than Social Security. 21% of the households received Social Security. The average income from Social Security was $12,625. These income sources are not mutually exclusive; some households received income from more than one source.

11% of people in Indianapolis live in poverty. 17% of related children under 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 7% of people 65 years old and over. 8% of all families and 20% of families with a female householder and no husband present had incomes below the poverty level. 17% of the households in Indianapolis, Marion County, received means-tested public assistance or noncash benefits. 4% of the households did not have telephone service and 10% of the households did not have access to a car, truck, or van for private use. 37% had two vehicles and another 15% had three or more.

There were 322,000 occupied housing units with 187,000 (58%) owner occupied and 135,000 (42%) renter occupied. The median monthly housing costs for (specified) mortgaged owners was $931, (specified) non-mortgaged owners $267, and (specified) renters $569. 23% of owners with mortgages, 13% of owners without mortgages, and 31% of renters in Indianapolis, Marion County spent 30% or more of household income on housing. Marion County had a household population of 779,000 of which 52 % were

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[5] Marion County Public Records; available from http://www.marioncounty records.com/; internet; accessed 1 October 2005.

females (404,000) and 48 % were males (375,000). The median age was 32.5 years. 26% of the population were under 18 years and 10 % were 65 years and older.

The school for which the writer is employed is located in Marion County, in the neighborhood known as "The Meadows." This area is known for poverty, crime, and drug use. While the city is making an effort to revitalize the neighborhood through the renovation of apartment homes and condominiums, *the Meadows* remains an eye sore to the community. The Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School has become a catalyst to the improvement of the life of the meadows because of its mere presence.

The writer's context of ministry is within The Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School. The Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School is a public, charter school. It is the first accelerated school in the state of Indiana. The school is designed to offer powerful learning opportunities and innovative classroom structures in an effort to keep students interested, engaged, and enrolled in school. The Tindley School offers a rigorous, college-preparatory program seeking to challenge each one of its students to pursue education beyond high school. It is an early college program that allows Tindley students to tackle college courses while still enrolled in high school. The Tindley School propels all of its students through honors-level, college-preparatory courses. All courses on the Tindley Course Sequence are drawn from the state of Indiana's approved course list for Core 40 and Academic Honors. The Tindley School joins a unique cadre of secondary schools across the country seeking to immerse students in college courses prior to their graduation from high school. As an Early College High School, the Tindley School offers the opportunity to complete one to two years of college at no tuition cost. With an average class size of twenty students, the Tindley School seeks to personalize the

educational experience for its students. With no more than eighty students at a grade level, Tindley students have an opportunity to form rich and lasting relationships with the members of their graduating class. Tindley students commit to longer class periods (90 minutes), longer school days (7:30am-5:00pm), and longer school years (210 days). When students struggle academically, Tindley staff members are prepared to support the students through after school and weekend tutoring sessions. When the Tindley School is fully enrolled, it will serve no more than 420 students per school year from grades 6-12.

The Tindley School is fully accredited by the Indiana Department of Education and is the only certified member of the Accelerated Schools PLUS program in Indiana. Accelerated Schools PLUS (AS PLUS) is a national endeavor designed to transform whole school communities--especially those characterized by high poverty, low academic performance and remediation--to enriched environments characterized by accelerated instruction. Teachers employ teaching strategies that have been traditionally reserved for only the top 5% of students. The Accelerated Schools Project was conceived, founded, and developed by Professor Henry M. Levin at Stanford University in 1986.[6] Levin wanted to address these communities and the questions and challenges presented in the 1983 United States Department of Education report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. A nation at risk identified the need for school leadership and reform. Since their inception in 1986-1987, Accelerated Schools have spread to more than 1,500 elementary, middle, and high schools. Now located at the Neag School of Education; at the University of Connecticut, AS PLUS works in partnership with the National Research Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development.

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[6] Columbia University; available from http://www.columbia.edu/cu/news/election/biographies.html; internet; accessed 5 November 2005.

The Tindley School philosophy and curriculum are designed to get students involved in the community to impart a mutual sense of responsibility and accountability. This includes enrichment and service-learning projects that are directly connected to their academic course work. These field projects will:

- Increase the relevancy of classroom instruction
- Foster a student and community view of adolescents as valuable resources
- Introduce students to various professional career paths

The Tindley School also seeks to partner with the families of its students. Each family is required to meet with an administrator prior to the start of school to discuss the Family Resolution. The Resolution is a contract between the student's family and school administration. In the Resolution, students are asked to commit to pursuing admission at a selective college. Students are also asked to affirm that they will seek additional support when needed (even if that means an even longer school day, week, or year). Students agree to support the stringent school uniform policy. Families commit to fifty hours of service over the course of the school year. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and adult siblings can be found before, during, and after the school day providing support and encouragement to Tindley students. The Family Resolution unites staff, students, and their families in the mission and vision of the school.

The students at the Tindley School are taught to be leaders every day. School days are normally 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. On each Wednesday, the students have a half day of school and are dismissed at 12 noon. During this half day students participate in Community of Leaders (COL). COL is a venture which seeks to develop students to assume leadership positions. COL exposes students to different motivational speakers

that the students might be able to identify with and give them a live opportunity to witness leaders in action and find out what it takes to achieve their dreams.

In COL, the students do a number of things. They are in involved in a program through the YMCA called Youth and Government. Youth and Government compels students to address issues on a state and city level. Students actually research and write bills which they then present and debate at the statehouse. The process brings issues to the students which, without the program, they would ignore. Through Youth and Government, students learn how the government system works and thus allows them to be educated about how to be an agent of change. Likewise, there are students who participate in grant writing. These students research a need in the community and then write grants to fill the need. The goal is to teach the students to be involved in the life of their school, city, and state. Specifically, these students are being asked how willing they are to change that which they do not agree or like.

Students at Tindley School come from different backgrounds and areas around the metro city. The perspectives of the students are diverse due to the variety of neighborhoods in which they live. This point is significant because normally, in public school settings, African American students come from the same neighborhoods and their opinions and perspectives about government are one-sided, but this is not the case at Tindley. 62% of the students receive free and reduced lunch. Because so many of the students find themselves watching their family endure poverty, they have to be cultivated to be sensitive to their own context. Too many of the students try to cover-up for something over which they have no control. At Tindley, the students are pushed to make a difference now, as well as later.

Summary

Each day the students of Tindley School have an opportunity to do something great. Not only is receiving an education a great opportunity, but giving service to the community, instills a deeper understanding of the community and world. It would be inappropriate if the writer, or any adult in their lives, did not make himself or herself available for guidance. The writer believes many Tindley students suffer from a number of disadvantages, unknown to persons in leadership positions. The writer has had the pleasure of speaking to the student's on a more intimate level and has found that many of the students suffer from great emotional setbacks. The students of Tindley have to deal with family issues on a daily basis causing them to be sidetracked in their spiritual development. If the students are unable to win the battle at home, they will be unavailable to become agents of change in their community. The writer believes God brought him to the Tindley School that he might facilitate a healing process for the students and their families.

One way the writer shares with students is through Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). FCA is the largest interdenominational, school-based, Christian sports organization in America.[7] FCA focuses on serving local communities by equipping, empowering, and encouraging people to make a difference for Christ. On Thursday mornings the, writer facilitates FCA meetings with the students of the Tindley School. During these meetings, students have an opportunity be open and transparent about

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[7] Fellowship of Christian Athletes; available from http://www.competitivespirit.com/coachresources.html; internet; accessed 5 November 2005.

personal and traumatic experiences. Through the word of God, the group searches for answers and healing.

Tindley students face many issues forcing them to grow up before their time. Some single parents give their students the impression that they should bear more responsibilities in the home. There are students who are working to help the family survive. The writer has to constantly remind them that they have the rest of their lives to work. The only responsibility they have right now is to go school and do well. The writer wants to see the students of the Tindley School, and teenagers all over, be free from problems rightfully belonging to their adult family members. The writer will continue to work with, and develop, the students of the Tindley School so they might grow to be agents of change. One of the things the writer works and prays for is that God's presence will be felt in the Tindley School building. In every possible way, the writer seeks to infuse the love of God into the fabric of the Tindley School. One thing that excites him about his current context of service is that despite the fact that the Tindley School is a public school, God's presence is often recognized in the building. There is a spirit of serenity and the students have recognized and learned to recognize His presence.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THE MINISTRY PROJECT

> "Negro children needed neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What they need is education."[1]

The purpose of this chapter is look extensively at the resources that form the state of the art in the ministry project. The sources included support the principles and models of ministry that assisted in the development of this project. The researcher has also included information that pertains to social justice and political activism. The researcher found a significant number of sources which provided insight into the development and empowering of parents to be involved, infused, and emphatic in lives of their children and school. However, the researcher was unable to find many sources to develop the project model as it relates to covenant keeping between parents, students, and schools.

There are literally thousands of books, journal articles, and stand-alone reports on the subject of parental involvement and its effect on school-age children. These writings include research reports, expert opinions, theory papers, program descriptions, and guidelines for establishing and forming parental involvement programs designed to empower and educate parents on the importance of their contribution in their child's education. A great many of these reports are informative and useful, and because parent

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[1] W. E. B. Du Bois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" 4 J. *Negro Education*. 328 (1935).

involvement has become a "hot topic" in the past few years, there is considerable current information.[2]

Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Successful Practice

Rhoda McShane Becher, author and researcher, examined the correlation between of parental engagement and academic success. She found that there are several key family process variables--or ways of behaving--that are clearly related to student achievement. Becher also found that children with high achievement scores have parents who have set and maintained high expectations, respond to and interact with them frequently, and see themselves as teachers of their children. Becher reports that parents of children who score high also use more complex language, provide problem-solving strategies, act as models of learning and achievement, and reinforce what their children are learning in school.[3] Becher asserts that parent involvement influences the child's and family's approach to education. As such, a continued effort to participate in the child's life and education on the part of the parents should elicit positive results that parents, schools, and students are able to see, such as better grades, improved test scores, attitude about school life, and most importantly an earned promotion to the next grade level. Consequently, parents develop a better attitude about school and school personnel.

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[2] K. Cotton and K. Wikelund. *Parent Involvement in Education*, (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001), http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/3/cu6.html.

[3] A. Henderson and N. Berla. *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement,* (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education., 1994), 42.

Becher concludes her review by calling for parents to help gather support in the community for the program of the school, become more active in the community affairs, develop increased self-confidence, and enroll in other educational programs.[4]

Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities

In their work, James Coleman and Thomas Hoffer compare the reading and math achievement of low-income Black and Hispanic students in Catholic high schools with the achievement of the same population of students in public high schools. Coleman and Hoffer attribute the superior performance of Catholic school students to the greater involvement of families and communities in these schools. The researcher was able to glean from this study the importance of family and community involvement in local education.

Parent Involvement in Instruction, K-12: Research Synthesis

Kathleen Cotton and W. G. Savard reviewed and compiled a summary of a series of literature reviews conducted in response to the primary concerns of educators nationwide.[5] After noting the scarcity of research on parent involvement in the instruction of their children in kindergarten through high school, the authors summarized eighteen documents found to be relevant and valid to the topic of parent participation and student outcomes. Cotton and Savard discussed the results in terms of affective improvements as

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[4] Ibid., 43.

[5] K. Cotton, and W. G. Savard, *Parent Involvement in Instruction, K-12: Research Synthesis.* (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1982).

well as academic achievement. Various forms of parent involvement were examined, including home tutoring, providing feedback and correction on homework, monitoring study skills, parent-student discussions, and parent-assisted learning in the school setting. Outcomes of non-involvement with minority, educationally disadvantaged, and learning disabled students were used as a catalyst for improved parental involvement in the school setting.

Parents of High School Students: A Neglected Resource

S. M. Dornbusch and P. L. Ritter report the results of a survey concerning the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement in six San Francisco Bay Area high schools. Students whose parents attended school events and engaged in regular contacts with teachers and adminstrators had higher achievement than those whose parents were minimally involved or uninvolved. This information was vital to the project. The notion that the simple presence of parents can change the outlook of and performance in school is both encouraging and note-worthy. However, another significant factor that Christian parents need to recognize is the importance of allowing their presence to represent Christ.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Parental Involvement on High School Grades

P. G. Fehrmann, T. Z. Keith; and T. M. Reiners examine the effects of parental influence on time spent by high school students doing homework and time spent watching television. The longitudinal study consisted of 28,051 high school seniors from

an area high school[6]. Data from a questionnaire was analyzed. The researcher concluded that parents who restricted their children from watching limitless television noticed an increase in completed homework, quiz and test grades, and overall performance.

Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement

Anne Henderson compiled forty-nine studies of the effects of parent involvement on children's academic achievement and the performance of schools. The research showed three wide-ranging approaches to parent involvement, namely those that attempt to: (1) improve the parent-child relationship in the context of the family, (2) integrate parents into school programs, and (3) build a strong relationship between school, family, and the larger community. In regard to the first approach, Henderson noted that the majority of the research finds that a positive learning environment at home has a powerful impact on student achievement. Students who feel cared for will produce better work in school. The second approach is illustrated by Rhoda Becher's extensive review of parent education literature, which finds numerous studies documenting the effects of school-based programs that train low-income parents to work with their children.[7] These effects include significantly improved language skills, test performance and school behavior, as well as important effects on the general educational process. The third approach is illustrated by studies of community involvement which suggest that the degree of parent and community interest in high quality education is the critical factor in the impact of the

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[6] P. G Fehrmann, T.Z. Keith, and T. M. Reiners, Home Influence on School Learning: Direct and Indirect Effects of Parental Involvement on High School Grades, Journal of Educational Research 80(1987): 330-336.

[7] A. Henderson, *The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement—An Annotated Bibliography*,(Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1987). 29.

school environment on the achievement and educational aspirations of students. The researcher clearly shows the direct correlation between parental interest and student outcome.

Is "Parenting" Essential to Good Teaching?

J. P. Comer discussed parent involvement in the context of social changes in the past forty years. Comer discussed projects undertaken in New Haven, Connecticut elementary schools in which parent involvement activities were largely responsible for dramatic improvements in student achievement. Students in these schools were 99% African-American and from low-income homes. The writer used this article as a model for success. The Tindley School is 98% African-American with students who are in need of strong parental involvement.

African-American Experience

The Black Church in the African American Experience

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya's "*The Black Church in the African American Experience*" gives a great picture of the history of the African American church. Lincoln and Mamiya provide a vivid picture of the struggles and accomplishments of the church as well as the role the church played in education. This is hugely relevant to the writer of this project. For the African American church, education has been a part of the social and political agenda for decades. Lincoln and Mamiya note that many African-American churches, such as Catawba Presbytery, founded colleges, such as Johnson C. Smith. They also express how the African American church was the

educational institution for African-Americans. The African-American church has always been pivotal in shaping the educational process and attainment for young Black Students.

Troubling Biblical Waters

Cain Hope Felder's *"Troubling Biblical Waters"* is a landmark study that provides the documentary and academic support to respond to the inevitable questions raised regarding the relationship between Black Theology and Christian tradition. For Black clergy, the Bible serves as the chief authority; it is the "Living Word of God." The Bible speaks of the liberation movement through the voices of its prophets, and the Black preacher is compelled to take these messages and make it relevant to the current life experience. Dr. Felder helped the researcher understand better Biblical interpretation and use that understanding to draw comparisons to modern life.

A Black Theology of Liberation

"A Black Theology of Liberation" by James Cone offers another paradigm for reviewing social justice ministry. In this text, Cone declares the Resurrection as analogous to the liberation of humankind and its application to social justice. Cone takes the position that God is a God who identified with the oppressed community. The universal note implied in the gospel message of Jesus is that Christ conveys hope and resurrection for all who are enslaved by principalities and powers.[8]

Social justice and political activism continues to be an absorbing event for any one person. It is a vehicle by which citizens are able to express their pleasure or displeasure

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[8] James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 3.

about societal problems. The empowerment of the people only comes through the vision of that one who is chosen for the season to fulfill the will of God and maintain a responsible approach to change among the people. The oppression felt by the children, in terms of parental involvement, is unfair and cruel. Black Theology helps the researcher to understand how to not only empower parents, but help parents become increasingly responsible in a seemingly unjust society.

The Mis-education of the Negro

Dr. Carter G. Woodson, pioneer and educator, focused on the educational injustices that have plagued African-Americans for decades. Theses injustices according to Dr. Woodson, are not at the hands of White America exclusively. The mere perception of inequality has led to injustices witnessed by African-American families. Dr. Woodson highlights African-American students who have had the opportunity to matriculate through a higher university but have failed to utilize their education by uplifting the community."[9] Dr. Woodson discussed teachers' inability to teach minority children. This blatant disregard to educate African-American children has translated into social issues larger than education itself. The African-American scholars were being trained in Southern Universities. The Northern and Western institutions were not concerned about African-American students because most of the campus populations were mostly Caucasian.[10] In chapter one, Dr. Woodson examines the root of the problem in regards to

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[9] Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro, (*Chicago: African American Images, 2000), 2.

[10] Ibid., 3.

education. This examination and analysis lays the foundation for the *Mis-Education of the Negro*. "The 'educated Negroes' have an attitude of contempt toward the educational system because they are taught to admire the Hebrew, Latin and the Teuton and to despise the African."[11] Most curriculum charts excluded great works and contributions of African-Americans. Dr. Woodson, concerned about Negro education in particular, was concerned about the Negro learning African history. He became aware that White teachers were subconsciously teaching Negro children that Whites were superior to Blacks. The schools that house mostly Negro students are places where the Negro students must be convinced of their inferiority.[12] According to an unknown source, "to handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching."[13] Dr. Woodson's publication silently reminds educators and parents that greater change is needed in order to perpetuate the great change that is due to African-American students. Dr. Woodson demonstrated how African-Americans uphold the view of the majority race: to keep the Negro uneducated and uninvolved many of the college educated Negroes have not found a way back to the community. Dr. Woodson writes:

> The people the teacher has been ordered to help have been belittled by his training. The 'educated' Negro then sets out to stimulate their (his/her) imitation of other people because he is considering his own race as having blank achievements. When the meaningless imitation inevitably fails, the 'educated' Negro becomes a chronic fault finder or a complainant at the bar of public opinion. And

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[11] Ibid., 1.

[12] Ibid., 2.

[13] Ibid.,3.

> when he see the fault lies at the door of the white oppressor whom he is afraid to attack, he turns upon the pioneering Negro who is hard at work trying to better his condition.[14]

Mentor Required Literature

Professional Development as Transformative Learning

Dr. Patricia Cranton raises an interesting dialogue in her book *"Professional Development as Transformative Learning."* As one begins to think about adult learning, one understands there are many ways that learning takes place today, such as learning on-the-job and working while attending school. There was a time when the adult population had to deal with minimal education, often due to issues of racism or deplorable learning conditions. Adult learning was self-motivated and self-taught by adults with little education themselves. One example is the Reverend Dr. Charles Albert Tindley of Berlin, Maryland.

Charles Albert Tindley was born near Berlin, Maryland in the 19th Century. His father was a slave, and he worked in those same slave fields for most of his young life. Tindley taught himself to read and write by the age of seventeen. He went to work as a Sexton at the Calvary Methodist Church in Philadelphia while he took courses in theology by correspondence from Boston University. Dissatisfied with reading translations of the Bible, Tindley taught himself to read Greek and Hebrew. He later earned two doctoral degrees. After many years of successful preaching on the eastern seaboard, Tindley was installed as pastor of the same church where he worked as a

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[14] Ibid., 6.

laborer. When the Reverend. Dr. Tindley passed away in 1933; there were over 12,500 members of the Tindley Temple United Methodist Church (the church was renamed in his honor) which is still a vibrant part of the Philadelphia community. Tindley was also known as the founder of gospel music. He wrote over fifty hymns which include, "We Shall Overcome" and "We'll Understand It Better By and By." His legacy is a constant reminder of goals and successes a person can accomplish when sparked by motivation.

The writer of this book wants readers to see how important it is for teachers to be learners as well. She notes that "Adult and continuing education professionals tend to focus their expertise on developing learners while failing to consider and cultivate their own growth and development".[15] Teachers are always pushing students to gain knowledge and learn all they can in a short period of time, never really addressing the whole notion of making oneself more effective through self development. Successful teachers recognize the power of being a continuous learner.

Dr. Tindley comes to mind as Cranton writes that "independence, freedom, autonomy, empowerment, self-direction; in one form or another have always been seen as the goals of human development and thus of education." Cranton outlines four dimensions of self-directed learning, which she adopted from Candy as a framework to discuss strategies for educators' development. First, Cranton explores the importance of self-direction as personal autonomy. Autonomy, Candy and Cranton agree, is conceiving a goal outside of the influence of others and exercising the mastering of who you are as troubles arise. Autonomy allows the learner to express a goal in relation to educator development. It also allows the knowledge and skills to develop goals of their own and be

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[15] Patricia Cranton, *Professional Development as Transformative Learning: New Perspectives for Teacher and Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), Inside book cover.

free of constraints or restrictions. When autonomy is goal-oriented, educators need to show the ability to develop a plan of action for development and picture themselves as autonomous. Cranton does not agree, however, that most educators are able to achieve autonomy as a goal as it pertains to educator development.

The second dimension is self-management. Self-management, as Candy defines, is the willingness and capacity to conduct one's own education. Candy argues that it is time for educators to make their own decisions about learning.[16] Self-management should play a role so that an educator might present material for the learner to be in control of ones transformative learning. Self-managed development provides the educator with the competence to give direction to one's own development and decision making about the nature of learning. If the goal is to push the learner to manage their learning then the educator should teach methods to do so. The survey given to twenty authors fostered the idea of being flexible, venturesome, and creative. The more repetitious the information and familiar to the educator, the more the learner begins to see oneself as independent and self-sufficient. The learner begins to understand how to access information in other resources like journals, libraries, and computer networks.

The third dimension of self-directed learning is learner control. Candy describes learner control as a mode of organizing instruction in formal settings[17]. Cranton says "within an organized setting, the degree of learner control is defined by the degree to

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[16] P.C Candy, *Self-Direction for Lifelong Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 61-62.

[17] P.C Candy, *Self-Direction for Lifelong Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 23.

which participants make decisions about the learning process"[18]. Cranton's view of learner control speaks to the idea that educators are able to maintain balance. Learner control is important to both the educator and learner as they seek to balance out one another. When there is no balance in the classroom, students suffer negative consequences. Participation from the learner is vital. There are times when the educator should be heard only, but these times are for the cognitive process and the mastering of information. Learner control is a feasible goal that can be obtained through diligence and hardwork. Educators and learners must come to the realization that being in control of one's learning is essential to career development.

The fourth and final dimension that Cranton indentifies is autodidaxy. Autodidaxy is self-education on purpose. Whenever adults seek to be educated outside of the instruction of a teacher, there is accountability for what and when learning takes place. This type of process is an autodidactic learning module. Self-education is not a new concept. The Rev. Dr. Charles A. Tindley, as mentioned in the beginning of this document, may be considered an autodidactic because he taught himself to read and write.

God's Politics

As the researcher seeks to develop or arrive at an understanding about social justice and political activism, Jim Wallis pushed the researcher's thinking beyond a concept of definition into a realization. "God's Politics" is, without a doubt, one of the most important books the researcher ever read. Wallis is enlightening and thought-

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[18] Patricia Cranton, *Professional Development as Transformative Learning: New Perspectives for Teacher and Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 67.

provoking. His passion for God and politics is not confusing, nor is it shameful. He writes with conviction and experience. Throughout the book, chapter after chapter, his points ring true as he documents his account and interpretation of events and speeches. He contends that the social and political voice of the nation needs to come from the church and its people. It was the institution of the church which brought forth political direction. The question then becomes, what happened to the involvement of the church? Where is the voice of the church? Wallis forces the reader to directly confront the current flaws of the nation and its churches. Of course, ultimately, they both need Jesus.

Wallis breaks up the journey into six parts. As he writes to help one understand the changing of the wind, the researcher has become convicted about his faith. The researcher has heard numerous sermons about faith; those sermons have challenged him to keep the faith. Reading chapter one of Wallis' book (text) pushed the researcher to take a closer look at how faith is used and applied. Politicians on the right believe God is on their side only. The embodiment of this misappropriation of faith by politicians is exemplified in the movie, "Head of State" when Chris Rock's Republican opponent for president kept saying "God bless America and nowhere else". It is this type of attitude that Wallis explores in chapter one of his book. He analyzes the misappropriation of faith in the Republican Party. According to Wallis, "Neither religious nor secular fundamentalism can save us, but a new spiritual revival that ignites deep social conscience could transform our society."[19]

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[19] Jim Wallis, *God's Politic* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 7.

The Changing of the Wind

Religious voices are being heard around the country and they have helped to spark change. The religious right has lost some of its luster and hold on society. Wallis reverts back to the fundamental basis of the Christian movement—faith. The faith of the Right has become the faith of a small group of Americans. "The Changing of the Wind" is about the religious rhetoric of the Right versus the nonexistent voice of the Left on matters or values of God.

Wallis says, "The politics of Jesus is the problem for the political right."[20] The fact that Jesus focused His ministry on the poor is a problem for the Right. Its unwillingness to help the poor of this country and yet maintain constituency who support the agenda of the Right is confusing and detestable. Are these groups really blind to the fact that those persons that they supported and voted for have cut money and programs necessary for the nations neediest. The fight against poverty must not be a partisan effort but rather a nonpartisan agenda with bipartisan support.

Now, even while Wallis agrees with the Right against what Jesus has said about the poor, the researcher contends that one cannot expect the Right to do everything correctly. As well, one cannot expect the Left to be on the opposite end doing everything right according to the teachings of Jesus. Consequently, the left has opted not to deal with religious issues.

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[20] Jim Wallis, *God's Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 15.

Introduction to Theology

"Introduction to Theology" is a resource manual written in textbook form. It is co-authored by Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra. Thomas was the Professor of Theology at Episcopal Divinity School from 1952-1993, and is currently an adjunct faculty member at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. Wondra is Associate Professor of Theological Studies and subdean for the Rochester Campus for the Bexley Hall Theological Seminary in New York. There are twenty chapters with a wealth of information for anyone willing to learn about theology. Each chapter is comprised of discussion questions to facilitate the reader in studying and analyzing the content. Each chapter gives a summary of, based on Biblical principles. Being familiar with most of the content of this book, the researcher found himself reading to gain more knowledge about theology.

Thomas and Wondra argue that the problem of authority in Christian faith can refer to any of the following questions:

1. How can we know about the historical origins of Christian faith (historical authority)?
2. How can we know what is true Christian faith? How can we determine what is and is not part of Christian faith (theological authority)?
3. How can we know what we ought to do as Christians? Who can properly claim total allegiance and commitment (ethical and moral authority)?
4. How can we determine what we are required to do and what consequences we will face if we do not? Who can force us to do something (juridical or political authority)?

5. How can we determine what we must believe and do in order to be a member of the church? Who determines these requirements (disciplinary authority)?[21]

Thomas and Wondra focus on question 2 because they want their discussion to remain theological. They have found four answers to question 2 on the problem of theological authority of which they strongly disagree:

1. True Christian faith is what is taught literally in the Bible (biblical inerrancy)
2. True Christian faith is what is pronounced by a single infallible spokesman of the church (papal infallibility), or by a limited and select group of church officials in a single denomination.
3. True Christian faith is verified by consensus of Christian religious experience.
4. True Christian faith is consensus of what is believed "everywhere, always, and by all"[22]

As Thomas and Wondra go on to explain their position on the authority of the Bible, they give reasons why none of the above work for them. In the introduction, the authors state that theology "must deal with fundamental question of the nature and meaning of existence, and it must interpret all areas of human experience, including the physical and human sciences, in light of the biblical revelation." They consider science and technology in an integrated fashion throughout the book, for example, in the chapters on Revelation, Providence, Humanity, and Eschatology.

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[21] Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra, *Introduction to* Theology, 3rd ed. (Harrisonburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 41.

[22] Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra, *Introduction to* Theology, 3rd ed. (Harrisonburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 42.

The Gardner C. Taylor Preaching Series: Prophetic Preaching

As researcher begins this diatribe about Prophetic Preaching, his mind immediately wonders about what would happen in his context if Jesus was the center of focus. There are many students who have suffered a great deal of embarrassment, often brought on by their own actions. The researcher believes that prophetic preaching is as much a part of social justice and political activism as anything. Most Civil Rights leaders adorned pulpits all across the south telling the good news of Jesus the Christ, while at the same time giving people strength, hope, and the mandate to fight just a little while longer. A prophetic preacher does not fabricate the truth or give false promises. The preacher is prophetic when he or she tells the unadulterated truth. When the truth is being told from the preacher, it puts him or her in a lonely place.

The Writer's Reflection: Poverty and Profit Seminar

On Tuesday, November 1, 2005, Dr. Claude Alexander invited a group of researchers to be a part of a program hosted by the Community Building Initiative (CBI) at the Levine Museum of the South. Dr. Alexander serves as the Co-chair of CBI. The CBI is a nonprofit organization that was established in 1997 by government and civic leaders. It strives to achieve racial and ethnic inclusion and equity in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. CBI has received numerous local, regional, and national awards for its work.

An opportunity arose for the writer to meet Martha Schmitt during dinner in an upper room of the Levine Museum of the New South. Martha Schmitt and her husband

John were named the Philanthropists of the Year. Mrs. Schmitt had a deep concern about children who are not given the tools they need to survive in our nation. Her discussion was centered around the educational system. In many cases, the guidance counselors have failed to inform and guide African-American students in their attempt to attend college. Mrs. Schmitt also shared that poverty needs to eliminated in order for the playing field to be level. She stated that education is the only way out of poverty. She spoke of fathers who pay child support, yet are left with little means to take care of themselves. The conversation did not format any conclusions; however, her comments were intriguing because she is a Caucasian woman analyzing and discussing issues concerning African-Americans.

Carole Hughes also spoke at the seminar and encouraged everyone to become more involved in the fight against poverty. She provided a number of statistics about children, healthcare, wages, and hunger. Ms. Hughes spoke about women like Lynette, secretary of the Crisis Assistance Ministry. Lynette delivers papers in the morning, goes home to get her children ready for school, and gets to her job at the Crisis Assistance Ministry by 8am for $9.50 per hour. Every other weekend she takes care of elderly people. Lynette works hard, according to Hughes, only find herself still in poverty. She is labeled "the working poor."

Other speakers were William Luchtenberg, Lawrence Davenport, Gary Grant, Erskin Bowles, and Tom Lambeth. As Luchtenburg moderated the event, he painted the vivid picture a much-divided South during the President Franklin D. Roosevelt era. He spoke in-depth about the New Deal created under President Roosevelt in the 1930s.

The responses of the panelists were clear and exciting. The first question asked was how far do you think the country has come since the 1930s? Lawrence Davenport responded with a reverberating thought: "It is 65 years later and we are still talking poverty." This statement begs the question, "Why are we, the richest nation in the world, talking about poverty?" We are becoming a society of the "haves and the have-not's." Everyday people are losing their jobs, pensions, and healthcare. In rural areas, according to Gary Grant, economic development means building prisons. The government is barely concerned with about education, but rather, where they can incarcerate youthful offenders.

It is clear that champions are needed to combat poverty and inequality. It will take a group effort to overcome the many societal issues that plaque this great nation.

Research Design

"Research Design" by John W. Creswell was essential to the researcher's work. It aided the writer in deciding which methodology was best suited for use in the writer's project. The writer chose the qualitative method. Creswell's book assisted the writer in the decision to use a focus group study. The writer had tangible results available in the form of journal writing and a new acceptable covenant. The most helpful part of Creswell's book was chapter ten, as it helped the writer in understanding how to collect and read and analyze the data from the focus group.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The theoretical foundation for this ministry focus is "Social Justice and Political Activism." The researcher will build value in this document by focusing on the injustices of parental involvement and possible solutions to this problem. The significance of the Biblical foundation is simply, that this project is based upon the premise that Christian parents should view covenant keeping as a sacred reflection of their relationship with Christ. The children of the United States of America are clearly the face of poverty. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, there are 73 million children in the United States of which 39% or 28.6 million live in low-income families and 17% or 12.7 million live in poor families.[1] The number of poor children has not changed for more than five years. The numbers speak volumes about the Nations commitment to children who are without opportunities that other children might have available. Clearly education is the key to poverty. The problem is the lack of support from the National, State and Local Governments. Children are failing in school and because they are failing in schools, they are failing in life. This push to make schools accountable is somewhat misplaced. The reader shall see in chapter five of this document that parents need have a vested role in the education of their children.

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[1] National Center for Children in Poverty, "Basic Facts About Low-Income Children: Birth to Age 18," Columbia University, http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_762.pdf (accessed September 1, 2007).

Children need their parents to help get them through the educational processes and institutions.

The African-American Church has been a pillar of support for families for decades. They provided an environment of community where people could be acknowledged and established as they are. The church was a place where the African-American male or female were treated with respect and dignity. The people were able to be in charge of something and take pride in leadership roles despite what they might do for a living. The church has been the one place where the street cleaner and custodian were/are able to make tough decisions regarding the people in the community. Certainly they were unable to be in charge on the job.

What is Social Justice and Political Activism? Social Justice, according to *Webster's New Millennium Dictionary*, is the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within a society.[2] As Political Activism is not a part of the dictionary, the writer believes that Political Activism is an intentional action to bring about change with a wrong in society.

The parents of Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School students are required to sign a family resolution, which states that by being committed to their child's education and they in turn are committed to the school. The resolution requires parents to commit 50 hours per school year helping with school events home and away, helping the classroom, in the school office, or just simply having lunch with their child. Through research, the writer has discovered that less than 10% of the parents have served 50 hours; many are not close to completing the requirement. This poses a serious problem as

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[2] *Webster's New Millennium™ Dictionary of English*, preview ed., s.v. "social justice."

research has suggested that parent involvement in their child's education—as well as the school system—is paramount to the success of the child and the school. One could argue that parents work full-time jobs, which will not allow them to leave throughout the day to attend their child's school for meetings or school functions. Parents could also argue that taking time off from work would be a financial burden. Whatever the case might be, the writer contends that it is not an economic problem that the school is facing; rather it is a values issue that the school is facing. Parent involvement in this ministry context means parents must keep their word, their vow. Ascribing value and worth to a child is not uncommon to God and His word. According to Gen 1:31, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" Genesis helps us to understand that we have value to God. Humanity is part of God's creation, and He is pleased with His creation. It is important to understand how valuable God's creation is in God's grand scheme. It was not until after he created man that God said that what He created is good. No one has the authority to say anything about God's creation. He has already stamped his approval.

Secondly, according to Ps 113:5-9, in God's eyes a person's value has no relationship to his or her wealth or position on the social ladder. Many people who have excelled in God's work began in poverty or humble beginnings. God supersedes the social orders of this world often choosing his future leaders and ambassadors from among social outcasts. God wants to demonstrate by actions that all people are valuable and useful in God's eyes.

A third reason humanity has value to God is found Mt 10:29-31 where Jesus said that God is aware of everything that happens even to sparrows, and human creation is far more valuable to him than they are. Humanity is so valuable that God sent his only son to die (Jn 3:16). Because God places such value on us there is no need to never fear personal threats or difficult trials. Nothing like this can shake God's love or dislodge His Spirit from within. Since God ascribes such value to His creation, how much more should we as parents ascribe value to our children?

Fourthly, Num 10:29-32 indicates by complimenting Hobab's desert skills, Moses let him know his services were needed to continue the work. People cannot know how much one appreciates them if one does not tell them they are important. Complimenting those who deserve it builds lasting relationships and helps people know they are valued.

Fifthly, appearance doesn't reveal true value. In 1 Sam 16:7, God warns Samuel against judging by appearance alone. When one judges by outward appearance, one may overlook quality individuals who lack the particular physical qualities society currently admires. Appearance does not reveal what people are really like or what our true value is. In Lk 12:22-34, God again ascribes value to His people. Jesus says life is about more than just food and clothes. Life goes beyond just physical needs. Ones value extends beyond that of the God created birds. The writer of Luke helps one to understand this concept of ascribing value; he lets one know that one ascribes value to things through our treasure. Treasure, in the case, is money, but it is also ones time and talent. The Bible is clear on ascribing value to His human creation. Gen 1: 24-31 tells humanity that they are a special creation, made in the image of God and given dominion over all the earth. Humanity is made in God's spiritual nature, personality, and rationality.

Ones identity is wrapped up in God. He created humanity; they are important to Him and the inner qualities humanity posses are most important to the Kingdom. In Rom 5:6-11 explains that we are sinners and enemies. However, Christ died when it made no sense at all according to the world's standards. It makes sense because He loves and wants to "save" His people. God again lets one know one is valuable in His sight.

Not only are some parents failing their children by not being involved but the government is failing children all across the United States of America. Marion Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, D.C., has continued to criticize President George W. Bush and his administration for lack of funding for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Marion Wright Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund have written articles entitled Leave No Child Behind. These articles were written prior to President Bush and his administration coining the term No Child Left Behind. President Bush has taken the ideas of Marion Wright Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund and misused the intended use of the program. Marion Edelman in an article written for *Christian Ethics Today* in June 1999 outlines the problematic issues facing children in the United States of America. She says:

- By numerous indicators, only a fraction of the students in most of our schools are achieving at high levels and many leave school without the critical skills they need to succeed in the workplace.
- Far too many students drop out of school before they have the credentials to compete for good jobs that will provide financial security for themselves and their families.
- A rapidly growing economic gap has developed between those who complete four years of college and those with only a high school education or less. In 1997, college graduates on average made over $40,000 compared to less than $23,000 earned by the average high school graduate-a wage gap of 76%.
- Far too many students and families still lack appropriate access to medical care due to a lack of insurance and still more lack the

option of quality child care and preschool experience in the early years when parents have to work or are unable to afford or provide it.

- Today, more than 14 million American children (nearly one in five) live in poverty even though the economy continues to expand, and more and more millionaires are created each day.
- While the number of poor children has not decreased during the past five years of America's economic expansion, the number of poor children living in working families has steadily increased. Indeed, nearly 10 million of these 14 million poor children live in a household where at least one person worked in 1997.
- And, more poor children are very poor. The number of children living in families with incomes below one-half of the federal poverty line (which equals about $6,400 a year for a three-person family, or less than $123 a week) increased in 1997 for the second year in a row. The number of these children has increased by 20 percent since 1995.[3]

From the above findings, one can determine that our children are in grave trouble. Many institutions do different things to care for the United States children, however, the government, has not provided enough support for programs to be completed in their entirety or to continue programs that work. Ms. Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund have worked tirelessly for the United States children and their families. Ms. Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund started a program called "The Act to Leave No Child Behind." This program sought to provide federal support to ensure every child a head start and a better education; helps assure more children a place to call home; expands tax relief to help low-wage working families escape poverty and become self-sufficient; assures every child enough to eat; and supports successful transition to adulthood through positive youth development measures; as well as a number of other

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[3] Marian Elderman, "Leave No Child Behind," *Journal of Christian* Ethics, 22, no. 3 (1999). Christian Ethics Today, viahttp://www.christianethicstoday.com/issue/022/Leave%20No%20Child%20Behind%20By%20Marian%20Wright%20Edelman_022_23_.htm

initiatives aimed at giving each and every child a safe, fair, and healthy start in life.[4] In a real since President Bush has taken something meant for good and made it bad. As a result of this bamboozlement the children of the United States are victims of a society that does not care enough to put their money where their month is.

There are different cultures in the United States that have different approaches to helping and/or saving children. One of the relevant cultures to this document theoretically and historically is the Jewish Culture. Anita Diamant in her book *Living A Jewish Life* says that study is considered to be a virtue for children only and education is considered a lifelong obligation and joy for Jews of every age and status.[5] The knowledge possessed by children ultimately came from the home. How one learned and studied was taught by mom and dad and not left up to the teachers. Jewish children developed learned behavior as it pertains to growing and thirsting after knowledge. The writer is impressed with the consistency of the culture of Jewish people. Ms. Diamant also writes that in the Torah, the Israelites were challenged to become a "nation of priests" and the Jews became a nation of students.[6] The goal of Jewish education is to impart skills, concepts, vocabulary, curiosity, and commitment that will motivate a lifetime of Jewish study. The Jewish culture emphasizes parental support and participation; and like most other research documents pertain to parental involvement, this support and participation starts in the early school years of the child. Children are

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[4] Children's Defense Fund, "Congregations to Leave No Child Behind," http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/Search?query=Leave+No+Child+Behind (Accessed September 2007)

[5] Anita Diamant, *Living A Jewish Life* (New York, NY: Harpers Collins Publisher, 2007), 115.

[6] Ibid., 115.

not shocked as they grow older and find out they are expected to continue to achieve at a high level.

Biblical Foundation

> The Bible narrates the primary paradigmatic events that share the identity of the Christian community, for as people of the book. Christians comprise a fellowship of persons who gather around the story of Jesus Christ. We become the contemporary embodiment of Jesus narrative and hence we are indeed, the body of Christ.[7]

The Bible abounds with messages and parables of struggles, oppression, and freedom. These messages represent the critical linkage of the gospel and the Church's liberation responsibility. These messages also represent this same linkage toward individual Christians. In the Old Testament, trials of the poor, the slaves, widows and strangers are established as obligations of those who are in power, wealthy, or have been blessed with God's favor in any aspect of their lives. These biblical edicts address the question of whose responsibility it is to respond to the call for social justice and political activism on the behalf of the oppressed. In a review of selected works, the writer found the following examples of scriptural texts from the Old Testament and its emphasis on social justice and political activism as it relates to covenant keeping.

What is a covenant? A covenant is a formal agreement or treaty between two parties with each assuming some obligation.[8] In the Old Testament, a covenant might be a pact of mutuality concerning individuals, such as Laban and Jacob (Gen. 31:44-54).

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[7] Stanley J. Grenz, "The Spirit and the Word: The World-Creating Function of the Text," *Theology Today* (October 2000): 367.

[8] *Harper's Bible Dictionary, 1st ed., s.v. "covenant."*

Laban and Jacob wanted to be friends and not enemies. Their pact or covenant with one another included God and they built a heap of stones as a witness to their commitment to covenant. God was to be the overseer of the covenant and the lesson learned is that it is not vain to trust in God. David and Jonathan present another covenant in1 Sam 18:3; 23:18. Jonathan wants to deeply express his love for David and David to Jonathan as well. In doing so, they covenant with one another; unusually they covenant souls as *Mathew Henry's Commentary* declares, "this union of souls is from partaking in the Spirit of Christ.[9]

In the book of Genesis, Abram's call can be viewed as the beginning of a man's liberation from pride followed by an exodus that illustrated God's true purposes for humankind. The history of Israel can be viewed as the symbolic journey of all oppressed people; their special suffering places them in a unique covenant relationship with God. In fact, God chooses to embrace the oppressed and not the oppressor; God himself calls the oppressed into being.

In Exodus, Moses, the great freedom fighter, answered the call from God to return to the land of his youth and lead the Hebrews from bondage. The African-American church and individual Christians have used this "freedom story" as a sign of God's answer to prayers; in fact, the 430 year captivity in ancient Egypt parallels the historically documented captivity (slavery) of the African-Americans.

"Blacks were used as forced labor, physical bondage, lynching, rape, separation and destruction solely based upon race. It is an undeniable linkage to ancient Egypt."[10] In

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[9] NavPress Software Database. 1996. *Matthew Henry's Commentary (concise).*

[10] Exo 12:40

Deuteronomy 22:2-4 the Lord speaks of his expectation that man will exhibit humanity toward their brothers/sisters:

> If your countryman is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall remain with you until your countryman looks for it; then you shall restore it to him. [3] "Thus you shall do with his donkey, and you shall do the same with his garment, and you shall do likewise with anything lost by your countryman, which he has lost and you have found. You are not allowed to neglect them. [4]" You shall not see your countryman's donkey or his ox fallen down on the way, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly help him to raise them up. (NASB)

Sacred covenants are found in Jos 9:18-21. In this text, the Israelites kept their word which they gave to the Gibeonites as the Israelites confirmed that they were telling the truth.

> [18] But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel. The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders, [19] but all the leaders answered, "We have given them our oath by the LORD, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. [20] This is what we will do to them: We will let them live, so that wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them." [21] They continued, "Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community." So the leaders' promise to them was kept. Jos 9:18-21

The Book of Amos is one of the prophetic books of the Bible. The prophets were God's spokespersons: His intermediaries and the communications they received were in forms of dreams and visions. Amos (meaning Burden of the Lord) of Tekoa warned his people of the consequences for disobeying God's message:

> Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,
> Who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!" [2] The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness,

> "Behold, the days are coming upon you
> When they will take you away with meat hooks,
> And the last of you with fish hooks." (NASB)[11]

In Micah, the prophecy of doom is directly related to the empty ritualism of the church and by default, church leadership. The prophet stresses that God hates injustice. Micah preached against the inhumanity of his day; the rich were taking advantage of the poor, the rulers were deceptive and the church leadership was not addressing or serving the needs of the people.

Micah declared that:

> "But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do, what GOD is looking for in men and women. It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, And don't take yourself too seriously—take God seriously." [12]

These biblical passages are representative of the theme throughout the Old Testament that focuses on the essence of the biblical mandate for social justice and political activism. These biblical witnesses teach us that God is a God of liberation, who speaks for the rights of the oppressed, and avows or affirms the role of the Church, individually and as a community, to champion the rights of the poor and slighted in the community.

The social justice message is not limited to the Old Testament or its prophets. In the New Testament, God became man so that all persons may have life and have it more abundantly and to fulfill scripture. His lineage has been traced through the descendants of

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[11] Amos 4:1-2

[12] Micah 6:8

Ham and Shem—both groups of people of color and closely associated with Africa. Therefore, in African tradition, the vindication of the poor and underprivileged includes those who have suffered due to racism, discrimination, and other types of bigotry and injustice.

It is important to note, however, that the concept of race in biblical times is first and foremost related to the tribe of one's origin rather than with physical characteristics such as skin color or other physical attributes. The New Testament teaches that blood relations do not determine Jesus' true family; relations are determined by the higher criterion of whoever does the "will of God."

According to the New Testament, man's love for God and for his neighbors is grounded in God's love for man, which most theologians designate as *agape.* This is the starting point of God-man relationship. God does not love that which is already worthy of love; on the contrary, that which in itself acquires worth just by becoming the object of God's love. All humankind are worthy simply because God loves them. Herein lays the religious foundation for the equality of all persons. To suggest otherwise would mean that some men are more equal than others--this activity of divine agape love cannot be easily separated from God's righteousness.[13] The New Testament teaches that man is responsible for loving God with all ones heart and all ones soul and then also loving neighbors (defined as those who are need, regardless of their status) as they love themselves. (Mt 22:34-40) God has shown through the New Testament His desire to be in covenant with His creation. Through covenant relationship God absorbs the brokenness of man.

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[13] James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 50.

Who did God Covenant with?

Noah—Gen 9:8-17

> [8] And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,
> [9] And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; [10] and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you. Of all that go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.
> [11] And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.
> [12] And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: [13] I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. [14] And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, [15] and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. [16] And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. [17] And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

God promised to take care of Noah, Noah's family, and any creature traveling with Noah. God also promised He would never flood the world again. It is the latter part of the verse where those who are in the land of the living today can find comfort; as Gods established covenant with the new world. This covenant lifts up the following: (1) God is gracious and pleased to deal with humanity by way of a covenant as God encourages man to work hard and be obedient. (2) All of God's covenants with man are God induced and not man induced. Christians know God to be faithful. It is thus expressed both to raise our admiration and confirm our assurances of the validity of the covenant.

(3) When God covenants, it cannot and will not be disannulled. (4) God's covenants are made with the covenanters and with their seed; the promise extends to them and their children. (5) God takes into account that those who benefit from the covenant may not be in the position to fulfill their end. [14]

The particular intention of Noah's covenant was to secure the world from another deluge: God flooded the world once, and still it was as filthy and sinful as ever, God foresaw the wickedness. God promised He would never flood it again; for he deals not with us according to our sins. It is owed to God's goodness and faithfulness, not to any reformation of the world, that it has not often been deluged and that it is not deluged now. As the old world was ruined to be a monument of justice, so this world remains to this day, a monument of mercy. According to the oath of God, the waters of Noah should no more return to cover the earth:

> "Just as I swore in the time of Noah that I would never again let a flood cover the earth and destroy its life, so now I swear that I will never again pour out my anger on you."[15]

After God made the covenant with Noah he guaranteed this with a rainbow. When an agreement is made among men usually it is sealed so the covenants may be more solemn, and the performances of the covenants the more sure, to mutual satisfaction. God, therefore being willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his

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[14] M. Henry, *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: Complete and unabridged in one volume (*Hendrickson: Peabody, 1996), 52.

[15] Isaiah 54:9

counsel and covenant. God confirmed the covenant by a seal, which makes the foundations Christians build on stand.

This seal is affixed with repeated assurances of the truth of that promise of which it was designed to be the ratification as God said: I do set my bow in the cloud (v.13); it shall be seen in the cloud (v. 14), that the eye may affect the heart and confirm the faith; and it shall be the token of the covenant (v. 12, 13), and I will remember my covenant, that the waters shall no more become a flood, (v.15). I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant (v.16). God presents to His people line upon line a sure and strong consolation as to who has laid hold of this hope.

Abraham—Genesis 12:1-3

> [1] Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: [2] and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make they name great; and be thou a blessing; [3] and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (KJV)

In this biblical passage, Abram was removed out of the land of his nativity into the land of promise. It was designed both to try his faith and obedience and to separate him and set him apart for God. Matthew Henry comments: If God loves us, and has mercy in store for us, he will not suffer us to take up our rest any where short of Canaan, but will graciously repeat his calls, till the good work begun are performed, and our souls repose in God only. In the call itself we have a precept and a promise.[16]

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[16] M. Henry, *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: Complete and unabridged in one volume (*Hendrickson: Peabody, 1996), 10.

The actions taken by Abraham dictated his blessings. Although God made the promise, in order for Abraham to receive his promise from God, he had to be a willing participant. The writer wants the reader to know that Abraham was elevated because he kept his promise when he left his native country. One's trust and faith in God supersedes and transcends all doubt in regards to what is going to happen when we enter into covenant with God and/or man. When parents trust the school, administration, and teachers, then the covenants between the parties can be realized in student and school academic success.

Gen 12: 1-9 allows one to know that God's covenants include all people. When God called Abram, Abram moved out in faith from Ur to Haran and finally to Canaan. Leaving Ur must not have been very easy for Abram. According to Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times,* Ur was a highly civilized city, and Abram was called to leave it for the unknown. The school systems were among the top in the land.[17] God then established a covenant with Abram, telling him that he would establish a great nation. Not only would this nation be blessed, God said, but the other nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's descendants. Israel, the nation that would come from Abraham, was to follow God and influence those with whom it came in contact. Through Abraham's family tree, Jesus Christ was born to save humanity. Through Christ, people can have a personal relationship with God and be blessed beyond measure. God's covenants require a personal response. God promised to bless Abraham and make him great, but there was one condition. Abraham had to be obedient.

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[17] Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible Times* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 76.

This meant leaving his home and friends and traveling to a new land where God promised to build a great nation from Abraham's family. Abraham obeyed by walking away from his home for God's promise of even greater blessings in the future.

The writer believes on a daily basis that mothers and fathers send their children to school with instructions to do well and learn; however, the truth remains that each child leaves home not really knowing what to expect. Abraham is a good example of how to follow without opposing God's direction. It can be said that education is the stimulus by which most children and families become great. The promise that knowledge brings is one of prosperity and hope. Children leave home each day seeking after knowledge which others have grasped and then others have missed. God may be trying to lead one to a place of greater service and usefulness for Him. One should not allow comfort and security of ones present position make one miss God's plan for ones life. In Old Testament times, God agreed to forgive people's sins if they brought animals for the priests to sacrifice. When this sacrificial system was inaugurated, the agreement between God and man was sealed with the blood of animals. But animals blood did not in itself remove sin, and animal sacrifices had to be repeated day by day and year after year. Jesus in Lk 22:7-23 established a new covenant between man and God. Jesus instituted a "new covenant" or agreement between humans and God. Under this new covenant, Jesus would die in the place of sinners. Unlike the blood of animals, his blood would truly remove the sins of all who put their faith in him. And Jesus' sacrifice would never have to be

repeated; it is good for all eternity.[18] It is a joy to know that God's new covenant in Christ offers forgiveness.

While there are many examples of covenant relationships in the New Testament the writer desires to lift up Heb 8:1-13 for the purposes of this document.

> Here is the main point: Our High Priest sat down in the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. [2] There he ministers in the sacred tent, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands.
> [3] And since every high priest is required to offer gifts and sacrifices, our High Priest must make an offering, too. [4] If he were here on earth, he would not even be a priest, since there already are priests who offer the gifts required by the law of Moses. [5] They serve in a place of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven. For when Moses was getting ready to build the Tabernacle, God gave him this warning: "Be sure that you make everything according to the design I have shown you here on the mountain." [6] But our High Priest has been given a ministry that is far superior to the ministry of those who serve under the old laws, for he is the one who guarantees for us a better covenant with God, based on better promises.
> [7] If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it. [8] But God himself found fault with the old one when he said: "The day will come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. [9] This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. They did not remain faithful to my covenant, so I turned my back on them, says the Lord. [10] But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds so they will understand them, and I will write them on their hearts so they will obey them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.
> [11] And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their family, saying, 'You should know the Lord.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will already know me.
> [12] And I will forgive their wrongdoings, and I will never again remember their sins."

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[18] Hebrews 9:23-28

> [13] When God speaks of a new covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and ready to be put aside.[19]

The writer of Hebrews continues to complete an argument started in Chapter 7 of Hebrews. As the text unfolds in the early stages we find Jesus the Christ being acknowledged as the ultimate of High Priest (7:26). Many of the commentary writers believe this type of display in verse 26 is in stark contrast to the Levitical priesthood.

Levitical Priesthood according to *Willmington's Guide to the* Bible, often allowed dishonesty and idolization to rule their lives.[20] Christ took the priesthood to a greater level; a spiritual level not reached by the order of Aaron or the order of Melchizedek (king of righteousness) in the Old Testament. The writer of Hebrews goes to great lengths to help the reader to understand that Jesus the Christ is superior is everyway; and that Jesus the Christ is the way. In chapter 7 the writer of Hebrews explains the superiority Christ in 3 ways. 1) An oath or promise of God extablished Christ in this priesthood (7:20-21). 2) Christ's priesthood was permanent. Since he served as an eternal priest, Christ always lives to pray for those who follow Him (7:25). 3) Christ's character was holy and removed from sin (7:26-28). Jesus provided exactly the type of strength that weak and sin-plagued Aaron could not.

In chapter eight, the writer of Hebrews continues the argument made of the high priest in verse one. The text says that Jesus sat down. No where in the Holy Scriptures do read since Christ work of redemption is finished.

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[19] *Holy Bible: New Living Translation.* 1997. Tyndale House: Wheaton, IL.

[20] H. L. Willmington, *Willimington's Guide to the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1981), 520.

Here Christ is our King sitting on a Throne in Heaven. It cannot be made anymore clearer to any reader that Christ is changed the way Heaven does business. Christ, in this spot on the throne in Heaven mediates covenant relationship with God. Christ became a bridge to a better life. In addition to beginning a new order of priesthood, Christ also introduces a new covenant. A new covenant being introduced, as many commentators have indicated; that it is a direct reflection of the old covenant being dismissed. The old covenant is now obsolete. God had in the old covenant given written directions for the people to follow. This new covenant God puts laws into their minds and provides them with strength found within for living (Heb 8:10). God in prior covenants wrote laws to the people. The people were able see what God required of them. This new covenant is internal. The people are able experience God's desire. It's what Dr. Joel Gregory calls "seeing with eyes of the heart". Secondly, God provided personal knowledge of Gods-self for all people, not just for Old Testament priests or a select few (8:11). Being in covenant with God has no respecter of persons. Somehow, in our world today we believe we can recognize everything and everyone that God is in covenant. The truth of the matter is that Jesus came to establish that this covenant is unconditional. There is nothing that God is requiring of those who have accepted the Son of the God. Reflecting back on the Luke 22:20, where Jesus established a new covenant with cup, which is representative of Jesus the Christ, shed blood. The writer of this document wants to point out that Jesus, in Luke 22:18 gave thanks for the cup. According to Frank Alexander, "in essence Jesus is saying to God, thank You for allowing Me to shed My blood for Your people."[21] When Jesus shed His blood he did so knowing that the covenant would be made available

[21] Interview, Frank Alexander, Senior Pastor Oasis of Hope Church, August 5, 2007.

to all humanity. How does the faith community continue along this path of covenant when so many people and situations are out of control? One of the ways is to understand that in this covenant God offered forgiveness of sin (8:12). John Walvoord in his book *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* says, "Israel was also promised universal revelation of God's grace to them . . . The grace of God extended to Isreal does not exhaust the grace of God.[22] The bottom line is that Christians still receive these benefits as they come to know Christ as Savior and Lord today.

There seem to be many people in society making promises daily that they break on a consistent basis. What does God say about our promises? God has set an expectation for us to take our promises seriously. There are moments in our lives when we swear to do something or not to do something and then realized you could not fulfill what you promised. (Lev 5:4-6) God's people are called to keep their word regardless of how hard it might be to keep the promise. Jesus was warning against swearing (in the sense of making vows or oaths) when he said, "Just say a simple 'Yes, I will' or 'No, I won't'". (Matt 5:37)

Secondly, God will hold humanity to ones promises because God takes them seriously. Proverbs points out the evil of making a promise in a rash manner and then trying to examine what you have promised. (Prov 20:25) God takes vows or promises seriously and requires them to be carried out. (Deut 23:21-23) Most people have good intentions when they give their word, as Christians we should always want to show God

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[22] John F. Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1990), 502-503.

how bad we want to please him. And, Jesus says in Matt 5: 33-37 it is better not to make promises to God because he knows how difficult they are to keep.

God does not leave humanity without promises as he breaks down in advance what they are, beginning in Heb 8:6-13. These verses contain an important argument from writer of Hebrews, the promises of the New Covenant. The promises of the New Covenant are better, much better than the promises of the Old Covenant. The first promise is grace. God says "I will", six times beginning in verse eight. Some commentaries suggest that these two words are grace. The Old Covenant demanded obedience. The New Covenant is about what God is going to do for the people. It is important to note that God did not find fault with the covenant, but with the people.

Israel failed because they were not willing to cooperate with God in every aspect of the Old Covenant. This is where grace must abound and where the power in the blood of Jesus the Christ stabilizes. Secondly, there is the promise internal cleansing (v 10). As it has already been mentioned above, the Old Covenant was written externally and on stone. The New Covenant is written by God's Spirit on the human heart. One song writer said "what a wonderful change that has come over me . . ." It is God who changes and God changes the people from the inside out. When one understands that one's outward appearance no longer is pleasing to God, but rather how one grows to relationship through Jesus the Christ, makes all the difference in the world. Thirdly, there is the promise of blessings that never end (v 11). This shall become evident when the fulfillment of this promise is manifested through the establishment of the kingdom. This is the time when those who are called to witness and tell of the good news of Jesus the Christ are able to rest from labor.

Fourthly, there is the promise of forgiveness of sin(s) (v 12). The old covenant in Hebrews 10 made mention of sin(s) but there was no mention of forgiveness or remission of sin(s). The old covenant provided an opportunity for the blood shed of animals like bulls and goats could cover sins; but the shed blood of Jesus the Christ (Lamb of God) had the power to take away the sin(s) of the world. So this new covenant, like most new things, provides one with more options and interest. For a sinner to know that their sins have not only been forgiven, but they have also been forgotten should be something interesting and attractive. Lastly, there is the promise of never-ending blessings (v 13). As God called the makes it a point to call this a "New Covenant", it gives the reader the understanding and impression that the Old Covenant is no longer valid. As the researcher mentioned before, the New Covenant is first mentioned in Luke 22; Jesus and the disciple's commune together in the upper room. Jesus shares with the disciples that this is act the New Covenant in which Jesus shares with them. There no mention of another covenant which supersedes this covenant. This is an indication that the blessings and promises are in place until Jesus returns to establish His Kingdom.

Social Justice

There is one example from the ancient world that contains the most complete paradigm of what is meant by social justice and is distinct from righteousness or the call to upright living. In the Book of Nehemiah, the story is written of how a protest arose among the poorer Jews who were dwelling in Jerusalem after the return from Babylon.[23] The problem arose due to the social and economic poverty to which the poorest elements

[23] Neh 5:1-13

of the population were subjected. Nehemiah, the royal governor of Judah, was angry that such a protest was even necessary, and he promptly consulted the more affluent members of the community called in the text "the nobles and the rulers." Nehemiah rebuked them for the injustice and inequality that was rampant in the land. He also called a "great assembly" of the multitude of the Jews. To them he repeated the complaint and exhorted them to cease oppressing the poor and restore the lands and produce, as well, as a part of the money that had been usuriously exacted. To the probable amazement of Nehemiah, the rich promptly agreed to restore all that had been exacted from the poor in its entirety. Immediately Nehemiah summoned the priests and exacted an oath from the rich and powerful that they would fulfill what had been promised.

Symbolically, Nehemiah then shook out his cloak from his lap and called for the punishment by God of those who failed to keep their oath. He said, "So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labor, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out and emptied." The people promptly assented by calling out "Amen," and they praised the Lord. Nehemiah also records that, in fact, they carried out their promise completely.[24]

This story reveals the relevant features of an act of social justice. Social justice is clearly a form of justice that involves different classes of society and not between individuals. The doctrine of righteousness regulated the relationship between individuals. In this case, it is clear that the lower classes apparently had a recognized right of

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[24] K. D. Irani and Morris Silver, *Social Justice in the Ancient World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 25.

complaint.[25] Clearly the lower classes did not have to seek permission to voice their complaint, nor did they have to resort to threats in the fashion of the plebeians of ancient Rome who dealt with the patricians during the early Republic when the Conflict of the Orders was taking place. It was apparently the natural right of these poor Jews to voice their complaint to the ruler—in this case Nehemiah, the governor. Their complaint, however, did not call upon the royal governor to give them justice; in fact, Nehemiah did not issue an edict satisfying the complaint of the poor. Instead, the upper classes voluntarily, and without any sanction, yielded justice and restored the possessions of the poor. The appeal of the poor had been made on the basis of the equality of those from different classes. They prefaced their complaint by saying, "Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and lo, we bring into bondage our sons and daughters to be servant."[26]

The complaint was obviously addressed not merely to the royal governor but also to the general assembly which includes the oppressing class as well as the oppressed. The oppressing class, recognizing the equality of all and the socioeconomic injustice, promised restitution and justice for the oppressed. This is then confirmed by oaths and carried out completely.[27]

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[25] K. D. Irani and Morris Silver, *Social Justice in the Ancient World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 35.

[26] Neh 5:5

[27] K. D. Irani and Morris Silver, *Social Justice in the Ancient World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 25-26.

Historical Foundation

View of Social Justice in Antiquity

The notion of justice is an intuitive abstraction embedded in human nature holding fast to the belief that, in any interaction among humans, a person should receive what he or she deserves. Put another way, no one should receive undeserved benefits or be made to bear undeserved burdens. This is referred to as the *principle of intrinsic justice*. There is another, but related, aspect of justice, often called the *principle of comparative justice*, requiring that persons be treated equally.

Though in ancient times these principles of justice were widely accepted (the first more clearly than the second) they were not articulated, as we have done in modern history in the *language of rights*. The language of rights comes to us from Roman law where its roots lay in Stoic philosophy.[28] In ancient society, judicial language used consequences such as violation, deprivation, causing of harm, and so forth, in an effort to achieve modification of behavior and enforcement of rights. The judicial authority was called upon to dispense justice and to restore the person who suffered deprivation or harm to the state in which he or she had been originally. Judicial thought and language worked toward restoration of appropriate benefits and burdens rather then settling conflicting claims with no regard to the rights of other people.

One of the early applications of this mode of judicial thought appeared in the enforcement of contracts. In ancient practice, contracts properly entered were strictly enforced throughout the ancient world. Nonetheless, when a case of enforcement of a

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[28] K. D. Irani and Morris Silver, *Social Justice in the Ancient World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 3.

contract arose before a judge and the contract was seen to be egregiously unfair, the judge often altered the terms to make it somewhat fair.[29] This is important because it demonstrates, historically, that society recognizes the significance of covenants being just and fair for all parties involved. Society is always looking for equitable outcomes for all parties.

It is not clear as to what legal arguments were used to achieve justice. Roman law sometimes employed the category of "constructive fraud", that is, even though there was no proof of an actual fraud perpetrated on the victim, the conditions of the contract were such that no reasonable person would have agreed to them unless he was subjected to some deception or duress. Interestingly, in ancient Iran, a properly solemnized contract was considered inviolate; however, when the terms of the contract led one party to profit greatly and the other to suffer a loss, the judge might require the party to share some of his profit with the other party in the cause of righteousness! This legal requirement of sharing was not imposed if both parties profited, however, even if the profits were very unequal.

There were, indeed, several legal issues that were affected by these ideals, among them, especially, was the discharge of debts, payment of interest, and slavery. These issues could not be adjusted by judicial interpretation. Specific legal rules had to be introduced through royal edicts or special codes. These rules were often influenced the by religious leadership.

The premise of social justice is that society is responsible for the undeserved suffering of its members. From this, one may draw the conclusion that society as a whole

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[29] Ibid., 3.

should repair the deprivation and construct social means to ensure that such harm is henceforth avoided. The logic of this is the following: some action of person X has an effect on the state of person Y that constitutes harm or deprivation for Y. If Y's injury can be seen as undeserved, then X would ordinarily be held responsible and required to repair the damage. But, consider a second example: in the course of ordinary life in society and through no fault of his own, Y finds himself in a state of deprivation or dire need. Certainly, Y has suffered an undeserved burden, but there is no individual who caused it and could be considered responsible, nor required to provide the means to repair the damage. This dilemma was faced by almost every ancient civilization. Because at that period in the history of human thinking the focus was religious, the question became one of the justice of God—namely, why did God permit undeserved suffering? The practical implication of this was that since God is just, He wished the social authority to rectify the unjust situation. Thus the demand for social justice arose out of a desire for social, economic, and legal reform and appeared originally as religious mandates.[30]

Thus, society was responsible through its social norms, laws, and economic practices to create situations where the underprivileged and powerless would not end up in states of deprivation of their property and freedom. And indeed in many civilizations in the ancient world, particularly in the ancient Near East, there appeared special legal reforms such as debt forgiveness, limitations on the period of slavery, and provisions against usury.

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[30] Ibid., 4.

These reforms were brought about as specific directions from the divinity, often because of a general concept of what constitutes a just society as interpreted by the authorities ordained by the divinity responsible with dispensing justice.[31]

Education in the United States

As a Form of Social Justice and Political Activism

Prior to *Brown vs. Board of Education*, there was little societal investment in the advancement of education. Certainly in cases such as *Plessy vs. Ferguson,* there is recognition of the need for education and equitable outcomes for all students; however, education in the United States was compulsory, rather than a forum for social justice and equality.

Brown vs. Board of Education was a landmark case because it altered society's view of education. It was not merely about children, nor was it only about the education of children, rather, it was about cultural behaviors which the courts were ending. The laws ruled on by the court system were products of human tendencies to stereotype and discriminate against others' ethnic, religious, cultural differences. This case was the result of over 200 activists working individually and collectively to right what they perceived as a societal wrong. The decision inspired and encouraged human right activist across the country and around the world.

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[31] Ibíd., 5.

While the courts were codifying laws that were designed to enforce equality in education, individuals such as Mary Baca were galvanized into action[32]. She began a preschool program in her apartment whereby parents and students joined efforts to establish a foundation of educational excellence for the success of all children regardless of ethnic religious and cultural differences.

Not only were there individuals who identified a societal wrong and took action to rectify the situation, there were those who took a political stance in an effort to change society's inequities through legislation. In 1965, under President Lyndon B Johnson's leadership, the government declared a "War on Poverty." Stemming from this emerged the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) under which Title I became a compensatory education program. The objective behind Title I was to provide school districts serving populations with high percentage of low income student's financial assistance in an effort to improve educational programs. In addition to Title I, another program funded by ESEA is the Head Start Program. This too was a political attempt to provide educational, social and health services for underprivileged children in an effort to establish equitable outcomes for all children. Head Start strove to utilize parental involvement as paraprofessionals within the program.

Since the 1980's school reform has become a major political issue. Each candidate touts an educational initiative as part of their platform. Both President George H. Bush and President Bill Clinton offered similar education programs focusing on standards, both of which were stalled in Congress. In 2002, with bi-partisan support

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[32] Holly Yettick, "A History of the Head Start Program" The Cincinnati Post, May 21, 2003, final edition, http://www.cincypost.com/news/brainchild/ news_brain2headstart.html

President George W. Bush passed the NCLB act of 2002. The intent was to strengthen educational practices and outcomes.

Parental Involvement in Historical Context

The increase in societal influence over children's lives has become more pronounced during the past 100 years. Mann and Blackwell describe the rise in societal responsibility as resulting in a corresponding decline in the parental role noting that, "Parents gradually became more reliant on the school's judgment and the school's attempts to understand their children's abilities, personalities and intellectual potential."[33]

The increase of importance placed on social institutions such as schools, instigated a new view of the importance schools had in the lives of children. Beginning in the 1960s, policymakers began to recognize the importance of early (preschool) intervention as a means for improving the lives of disadvantaged, or "at risk" children[34]. One study of these early intervention programs recognized an evolution from "deficit approach models" in the1960s to "difference models" in the 70s and 80s and a current model focusing on empowerment.[35] What is most interesting about their review is the manner in which perspectives have changed to both understand and meet the needs of at-risk families. The early intervention deficit model programs were based on the assumption that targeted families failed to provide the skills, resources, and stimulation necessary to prepare their children for school –hence the "deficit model."

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[33]G. Mannan and J. Blackwell, "Business involvement in the schools: How and where do parents fit into the process" *Education*, 113, 286-292.

[34] Ibid., 113.

[35] Ibid., 113.

However, criticisms of this approach include a failure to consider contextual (community) factors and the implied belief that the values and standards promoted by schools were superior to those of families receiving assistance.[36] The goal of empowerment is not simply to "change" people, but to provide them with the tools which will enable them to better manage their own lives. The continued effort to bring parents and schools together must be an effort which empowers not only the parents but also the students nurtured in these families. For parents to see the benefits prior to the reality will enable them to be more supportive. Parent involvement has been a great sounding board for education across the world dating back to ancient times; however, in the United States parent involvement the first evidence of parental involvement is during the expansion of compulsory education, in the founding of the National Congress of Mothers in 1897. This organization is the pre-cursor to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The purpose of this organization is, according to an excerpt from the 1924 Handbook of the National Congress, as follows:

"A parent-teacher association is an organization of parents, teachers, and others interested, for the purpose of studying reciprocal problems of the child, the home, and the school, and the relation of each to the community and the state, in order that the whole national life may be strengthened by the making of better, healthier, happier, more controlled, and m ore intelligent citizens."[37]

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[36] H. Rose and R. Shepard, "The Power of Parents: An Empowerment Model for Increasing Parental Involvement," *Education* 115, no. 3 (1995): 373.

[37]Bethany Wallace's Online Research Portfolio, "Parental Involvement in Education," http://tiger .towson.edu/~bwalla4/researchpaper.htm (accessed September 1, 2007).

Little attention is given to parent involvement in schools until Compensatory Education Programs (i.e., Title I, Head Start). Most research on Parent Involvement centers on (1) Rates of Parent Involvement or (2) Positive impact of parent involvement. The writer had the privilege to speak with a former educational policy analyst with the Indiana Education Policy Center, Siri Loescher. Ms. Loescher also conducted research on CSRDs for the State Departments of Education in Michigan and Wisconsin, and for the Midwest Central Educational Research Lab. She states "There is not much attention on parent involvement beyond PTA activities, until compensatory education programs such as Title I, Head Start and Special Education Programs. The emphasis, Loescher asserts, on parent involvement in Title I increased significantly in the late 1990s with the Comprehensive School Reform Design Program. According to Loescher, states were given mock grants to form competitive grants for schools to implement Comprehensive School Reform Models. One of the major components in evaluating the grants was the degree parents were involved in the planning, and how parents will be in school. More recently Title I programs have been required by No Child Left Behind to incorporate parent involvement into the Title I programs.[38]

Parent Reasoning for Noninvolvement

Many times parents have reasons for not being involved despite efforts made by the school or community. Much research has been done in an effort to determine why parental involvement in school activities has declined so significantly. One study found that parents report minimal opportunities for involvement and indifferent attitudes on the

[38] Interview: Siri Loescher, former Educational Policy Analyst for the Indiana Education Policy Center. February, 9 2007.

part of the school personnel as factors influencing involvement.[39] Parents also indicated feeling intimidated by educational jargon which impedes communication between them and teachers. Other factors, including transportation, safety, and childcare issues, influenced parental participation in the school.[40] Yet another study indicated issues that may affect participation, such as language, culture, and socioeconomic barriers, limited educational background, and even parents' own negative school experiences. Any one of those reasons influence parental involvement and limit many from being actively involved despite opportunities provided by the school.

Disadvantaged parents, in particular, are often likely to feel threatened by the authority of teachers, perceived socioeconomic status differences, and lack of formal knowledge as barriers to participation[41]. Parents' limited education and personal difficulties with the school lead to fear and mistrust. Chavkin found that minority parents are intimidated by school staff and the institutional structure of the schools. They feel awkward about approaching school personnel, particularly if they have had previous negative contacts with the school.

Cultural differences may impede parent involvement as well. The parents' culture may affect how involved they become, as well as whether the teachers and school validate their language and culture.

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[39] K.V. Hoover-Dempsey, O.C. Bassler, and J.S. Brissie, "*Parent involvement: Contributions of teacher efficacy, school socioeconomic status, and other school characteristics*," *American Educational Research Journal* 24, no.3 (1987): 417-435.

[40] O. C. Moles, *Collaboration between schools and disadvantaged parents: Obstacles and openings* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 21-49.

[41] Ibid., 115.

Often when minority parents do not participate in traditional parent-school activities, teachers interpret that behavior as indifference. [42] Many teachers do not understand the cultural differences between parents and school staff and assume that poor parent attendance at events means that parents are not interested[43]. Some educators, however, do acknowledge that parents from some ethnic groups may be uncomfortable communicating with teachers or participating in school activities because of language barriers or differences in cultural values[44]

The above mentioned is one of the reasons the United States government continues to seek out ways to holds schools accountable and, in the process, keep parents on the same page as the school systems. Today the *No Child Left Behind Act* is intended to help curve the drop-out rate of students and to strengthen the educational process by which all students are a part. The national interest in education is needed; however, the interest has peaked and turned for the worse. The implementation of this Act has funding issues that prevent possibility of success. Although, President George W. Bush pushed for the implementation of this new measure of school reform, he has failed to ensure the monies needed for such a plan. As a result, NCLB has ceased to recognize the full benefits of its initial purpose.

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[42] N.F. Chavkin, "*Debunking the Myth About Minority Parents*," *Educational Horizons*, (1989): 119-123.

[43] A.L. Carrasquillo and C.B. London, Parents and schools: A source book (New York: Garland, 1993), 12.

[44] Delores C. Pena, "*Parent Involvement: Influencing Factors and Implications*" *The Journal of Educational Research* 94, no.1 (2000): 42.

According to *No Child Left Behind* documents, these are some of things that should be taking place[45]:

- **Title I funds be used only for effective educational practices.** Title I school-wide and targeted assistance programs are required to use effective methods and instructional strategies that are grounded in scientifically based research. School improvement plans, professional development, and technical assistance that districts provide to low-performing schools must be based on strategies that have a proven record of effectiveness.

- **States are to develop plans with annual measurable objectives that will ensure that all teachers teaching in core academic subjects are highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year.**

- **Local school districts are to ensure that all Title I teachers in core academic subjects hired after the first day of the 2002-03 school year are "highly qualified.** For new teachers, this means being certified by the state (including alternative routes to state certification), holding at least a bachelor's degree, and demonstrating subject area competency.

- **Corrective action is strengthened** (required after two years of school improvement)to include actions more likely to bring about meaningful change at the school, such as replacing school staff responsible for the continued failure to make adequate yearly progress, implementing a new curriculum, and reorganizing the school internally.

- **Fundamental restructuring of any school that fails to improve over an extended period of time** including reopening the school as a charter school or turning over school operations either to the state or to a private company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness.

- **Strengthen paraprofessional requirements** to include two years of postsecondary education or, for an applicant with a high school diploma, the demonstration of necessary skills on a formal

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[45] US Department of Education Website, http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbreference/reference (accessed September 1, 2007).

state or local academic assessment. All new hires must meet these requirements, and existing paraprofessionals have four years to comply with them.

■ **Emphasize that paraprofessionals may not provide instructional support services** except under the direct supervision of a teacher.

■ **Expand eligibility for school-wide programs.**
The poverty threshold for school-wide programs, which enable schools to use Title I funds to raise the achievement of at-risk students by improving the quality of instruction throughout the school, has been lowered from 50 percent to 40 percent.

■ **Annual assessments required in grades 3-8** which include all students.

■ **State and local report cards required** on student academic achievement.

■ **States must implement a single statewide accountability system.**

■ **Tighten provisions concerning adequate yearly progress** by requiring states to specify annual measurable objectives to measure student progress to ensure that all groups of students disaggregated by poverty, race and ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency data-reach proficiency in reading and math within 12 years.

■ **Substantially increase funding for state and local support for school improvement** (from one-half percent of Title I funds under the 1994 Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization to 2 percent under the No Child Left Behind Act, rising to 4 percent in 2004). Also establishes a separate $500 million authorization for Assistance for Local School Improvement grants.[46]

■ **Local school districts required to offer public school choice** to students in schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring so that no student is trapped in an underperforming school. School districts must provide transportation for eligible students, subject to the 20 percent rule described below.

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[46] US Department of Education Website, http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbreference/reference (accessed September 1, 2007).

> ■ **Require school districts to permit low-income students attending chronically underperforming schools to obtain supplemental educational services** from a public- or private-sector provider that has been approved by the state. Faith-based organizations are eligible to apply for approval to provide supplemental educational services.
>
> ■ **Require school districts to spend an amount equal to 20 percent of their Part A funds for transportation of students who exercise a choice option or for supplemental educational services,** unless a lesser amount is needed to meet all requests. These funds do not have to be taken from Title I allocations, but may be provided from other allowable federal, state, local or private sources.
>
> ■ **Notify parents of school choice and supplemental educational services options.** Requires districts to "promptly" notify parents of eligible students attending schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring of their option to transfer their child to a better public school or to obtain supplemental educational services.
>
> ■ **Establish Parents' "Right to Know" provision.** Requires local school districts to annually notify parents of their right to request information on the professional qualifications of their children's teachers.[47]

The United States Department of Education has found it impossible to adequately fund the NCLB Act and, as a result, educational institutions are not performing at the level the designers of this legislation envisioned.

It is evident that, historically, a movement toward social justice and political activism had its roots in education. Early activists' agendas revolved around empowering the disenfranchised through education. Despite modern efforts toward educational reform, such as No Child Left Behind, there remains a significant and systemic problem with the educational policies and practices in the United States.

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[47] Ibid., 15.

Theological Foundation

> Reconciliation means that Christ has freed us for this transformation. Christian obedience can only mean being obedient to Blackness, its glorification and exaltation.[48]

Liberation theology or "theology of liberation" is a term that was coined in the late 1960's. James Cone, in his book, *A Black Theology of Liberation, writes:*

> When we speak about God as related to humankind in the Black-White struggle, Christian theology can only mean Black theology, a theology that speaks of God as related to Black liberation.[49]

Black theology uses the history of African Americans as the starting place for its interpretation of the Scriptures, specifically, God's word and work in the world. For the theologian, "divine activity is inseparable from Black history."[50]

Liberation theologians begin from the premise that God is in an active relationship with the world and is an advocate of the oppressed and disadvantaged. "Black theology says that as Creator, God identified with oppressed Israel, participating in the bringing into being of this people; as Redeemer, God became the Oppressed One in order that all be free from oppression: as Holy Spirit, God continues the work of liberation"[51] This is the blessed Trinity that is the cornerstone of the Christian experience. The Holy Trinity represents the relationship God shares with His people. Ideally society must overcome the idea that children are to be seen and not heard. This may have been

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[48] James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 150.

[49] Ibid., 9.

[50] Ibid., 9.

[51] Ibid., 9.

the case some fifty or so years ago, but today it cannot be the case. When society raises the expectation from its children, how can society then silence the child on issues that affect their livelihood? These are not the same children from fifty years ago; these are not even the same young people from ten years ago. They don't think about or view life the way anyone thirty or over may view it. And so, society has become oppressors of our children. If one is not careful one would begin to believe that these children do not have an advocate because they have "gold's" in their mouths or their pants are sagging or they have jeans on skin tight. No, of course these are they that Jesus has come to liberate. Children need advocates that will rise to the occasion and change the outcome of their lives.

The African-American Christian needs a God who is an advocate and not simply a neutral observer. It is the duty of the church and individual Christians to challenge the establishment and move the people of God to a higher level of worship, service, and discipleship.

Black theology proposes to make the religious experience of African-American people a religion of Black power. Power is the ability to influence change; this is done through education, spiritual leadership, and divine intervention guided by the Holy Spirit. James Cone suggests that obedience always means going where we otherwise would not go; being what we would not be: doing what we would not do.[52]

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[52] James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 150.

> "Who do people say that I am?" Various people reply, "John the Baptist" or "Elijah" or "one of the prophets." Then Jesus asks, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answers, "You are the Christ."[53]

Christology is the question of who Jesus is, and where he stands, in relation to the social, political, and economic issues of human history. The very fact that Jesus would oppose oppression demonstrates how important it is for humans to ascribe value to other human beings. Who is Jesus the Christ? Many have attempted to define this intriguing Christ. His work and ministry are integrated into the very fabric of society's moral fiber. It is hard to understand why so many hate Him and why so many choose not to be in relationship with Him. Also on a daily basis many lose heart and grow weary of serving Jesus the Christ. Life's circumstances have pushed them in a corner and they have not the strength to fight or hold on. I must contend that they don't have enough o fight or hold, but rather they have abandoned their faith in Jesus. Getting to know Jesus is a faith walk. One cannot follow him, and know exactly where you are going without faith. According Donald L. Migliore, "faith in this person is not knowing about him but trusting in him and being ready to follow him."[54] Migliore contends that when a reference is made in the Bible and in church proclamation to Jesus, it is to declare that his life, death, and resurrection are "for us," "for many," "for all." The Bible supports this view point in Mark 10:45; Romans 5:8; 8:32; and I Corinthians 15:22. It is hard to imagine a faithful Christ abandoning his people, as the research has found in homes with parents and their children. Jesus is the example of sacrifice and hard work. Jesus committed his time to his

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[53] Mk 8:29

[54] Donald Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 142.

family and his disciples. On his path, he made allowances and provisions for those who dared to believe in His ministry. Jesus made a commitment when He came to earth to show us the way to heaven. His commitment and promise was sealed when he went to the cross to die and was raised on the third day with all power in His hands. Jesus is a promise keeper and covenant maker. Though the world wants to individualize the efforts of students and families, Jesus the Christ battled(s) with demons, the devil, and all the principalities and powers that hold families captive. It is by the cross and resurrection that Christ positively defeats these powers and frees those held captive.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd

Jesus takes care of and looks after His sheep. His sheep are the people of this world who have accepted Him and believe He will take care of them. Sheep are completely reliant on the shepherd to take them to where there is food and protection from wolves and other predators that would enjoy devouring a sheep that was left unprotected. The sheep in Jesus' flock need not fear anything for He has never lost a sheep that was placed in His care. (John 10:11-18; Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:1-7; Isaiah 40:10-11). A shepherd, of course, is someone who looks after sheep. But even deeper, a shepherd is responsible for the care and guidance of a group. Jesus distinguished between shepherd and hireling because a hireling does not sacrifice himself for the sheep, a shepherd does. To view Jesus the Christ as the Shepherd is an acknowledgement that one cannot do anything or go any place without the direct consent of Jesus the Christ. It is complete reliance on what He sees and what He says. *Trust* becomes foundational in the fight to stay alive in any relationship.

Although the sheep have no choice but to follow the shepherd, we who our followers of Jesus the Good Shepherd choose to do so, on a daily basis. Sometimes it is a difficult choice to follow the Shepherd and one is met with opposition and frustration. It is through this opposition and frustration that the Shepherd is able to do His best work; and at that moment trust is revealed. It is unimaginable that a person, especially a parent, would allow frustration or fear to drive them to quit.

Alexander Graham Bell says it this way:

> "What this power is, I cannot say. All I know is that it exists and it becomes available only when you are in that state of mind in which you know EXACTLY what you want and are fully determined not to quit until you get it."[55]

Michael Jordan puts it this way:

> "Obstacles don't have to stop you. If run into a wall, don't turn around give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it."[56]

There will be moments of weakness and uncertainty in the quest to complete the journey pre-determined by God. Complete faith and trust in the Shepherd is paramount in crossing the finish line.

Covenant theology is a system of interpreting the Scriptures on the basis of two covenants: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Some covenant theologians specify three covenants: works, redemption, and grace.

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[55] Quoteworld Homepage, "Alexander Bell," http://www.quoteworld.org/ Quotes/1169 (accessed September 1, 2006).

[56] Quoteworld Homepage, "Michael Jordan," http://www.quoteworld.org/ quotes/7411(accessed September 1, 2006).

Covenant theology teaches that God initially made a covenant of works with Adam, promising eternal life for obedience and death for disobedience. Adam failed, and death entered the human race. God, however, moved to resolve man's dilemma by entering into a covenant of grace through which the problem of sin and death would be overcome. Christ is the ultimate mediator of God's covenant of grace. Grace is God's unmerited favor. In other words, grace is what God gives for free. One does not have to do or say anything to get it; God distributes it freely out of the kindness of His heart. Jerry Bridges, author of *What is Grace* writes:

> When I was a boy growing up in East Texas, we lived near some railroad tracks. In those days, homeless men (whom we called hoboes) often rode the rail cars from town to town. Occasionally, one of those men would show up at our front door and ask my mother for a meal. Without asking any questions, Mother would go to the kitchen and prepare a plate of food for him. She gave it freely, without requiring any "work for food" on his part. She didn't ask him to mow the grass, trim the hedges, or wash the windows. She gave freely without any consideration or conditions.

He records that this act or gesture by his mother was not grace. He puts a different spin on the story as he writes and shares with the reader that if the scene were different then it would or could be considered grace. Bridges says that if a man came to the door who had robbed his mother and his mother went and gave the man the food instead of calling the police then that to him would be grace. The man in his estimation deserved to be arrested but instead his mother fed him. While the above example can be debated, the message is that God's grace is tangible and sufficient.

In the covenant of grace God provides Jesus as His guarantee for our salvation. It is through His grace that God meets the demands of covenant responsibility to man by the

gift of the Holy Spirit. The origin of the covenant is found through the love of the Father, the saving power of the Son, and the function of the Holy Spirit.[57] The covenant is eternal, unbreakable and unchangeable. God will forever be faithful to what He has promised. This covenant does not extend to everyone; only those have been chosen to unite with Jesus are extended this promise.

CONCEPTS OF COVENANT THEOLOGY

Comparisons	Covenant of Works	Covenant of Redemption	Covenant of Grace
Persons	With Adam	With Father and Son	With mankind
Promise	Physical/eternal life confirmed	Salvation provided for mankind	Eternal life
Condition	Obedience	— — —	Faith
Warning	Physical death	— — —	Eternal death
Time	Eden before Fall	Eternity past	Eden after Fall

The covenant of works, which is sometimes called the covenant of life because it reflects the reward for obedience, is a covenant based upon the condition connected with the promise. Essentially a person must fulfill a responsibility to be in compliance with the covenant. When the responsibilities are completed, God fulfills promises made by the Eternal. Basically it is you do your part and God will do His part. The covenant of works

[57] Eph 1:3-14

may be defined as follows: God entered into a covenant with Adam as the federal head (representative) of the human race in which God promised to bless Adam with eternal life if he would obey; if he disobeyed God, Adam would be judged with death.

Although there is no specific mention of a covenant in the early chapters of Genesis, the existence of a covenant is implicit. A covenant involves an agreement between two parties, in this case, between God and Adam in Gen 2:16–17, where God stipulated the terms of the covenant.[58] The covenant principle is also suggested in Lev 18:5; Ezek 20:11, 13, 20; Luke 10:28; Rom 7:10; 10:5; and Gal 3:12 because these passages suggest the laws were intended to give life.[59]

The promise of the covenant of works was that if Adam obeyed the command of God he would not die; this is suggested from the negative statement of Gen 2:17, "in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." In other words, if Adam did not eat of the fruit, he would live. This promise to Adam is consistent with other passages that emphasize the covenant, or law, that man was placed under by God. The promise for obedience was not the mere continuation of mortal life because that was already his possession. The condition God placed on Adam was perfect obedience. This is the condition for acceptance mentioned elsewhere in the Bible (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10). Adam was instructed not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17); that was the condition. The test was whether man would obey God or follow his own judgment.[60] Punishment for disobedience to the covenant of works is stated in the term

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[58] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 213.

[59] Ibid., 214, 216.

[60] Ibid., 217.

"die" (Gen. 2:17).[61] The term should be understood as comprehensive, including all penal evil. Death stands as the opposite of all that Adam was promised in life; Adam stood to forfeit physical, spiritual, and eternal life. "The life promised . . . includes all that is involved in the happy, holy, and immortal existence of the soul and body; and therefore death must include not only all the miseries of this life and the dissolution of the body, but also all that is meant by spiritual and eternal death."[62]

Liberation theology is a theological movement that has attempted to unite theology with the social/economic concerns of the poor and oppressed people, particularly in Central and South America. The movement, however, is even broader in scope, including blacks (which may be separately called "black theology"), feminists (which may be separately called "feminist theology"), and others. James H. Cone, professor of theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, is perhaps the leading expert of black liberation theology. He has written *A Black Theology of Liberation* in which he identifies Christian theology with liberation theology, defining it as "a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ."[63] Cone identifies liberation with the gospel of Christ; the gospel is helping the oppressed. Biblically, Cone bases his theology of liberation on God's deliverance of Israel from oppression and what He did within the community of the oppressed within Israel.[64]

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[61] Charles D. D. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1871), 120.

[62] Ibid., 9.

[63] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), 17-18.

[64] Ibid., 18.

Cone concludes, "The consistent theme in Israelite prophecy is Yahweh's concern for the lack of social, economic, and political justice for those who are poor and unwanted in the society. Yahweh, according to Hebrew prophecy, will not tolerate injustice against the poor; through his activity the poor will be vindicated.

Again, God reveals himself as the God of liberation for the oppressed."[65] According to Cone, Jesus did not come to bring spiritual liberation but to liberate the oppressed.[66] The resurrection of Christ means "that all oppressed peoples become his people. The resurrection-event means that God's liberating work is not only for the house of Israel but for all who are enslaved by principalities and powers. It is hope which focuses on the future in order to make men refuse to tolerate present inequities...to see also the contradiction of any earthly injustice."[67]

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[65] Ibid., 19.

[66] Ibid., 19-20.

[67] Ibid., 21.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the context of the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School, there are many opportunities for ministry projects conducted by the researcher. The researcher, a product of the African American Church, understands the importance of involvement of the church in the African American community, and in particular the schools in the community. The church has always been a conduit for those who are oppressed; face injustice, and subjugated within the structure of their respective communities. The needs of young African American youth have continued to be a struggle for the adult population to fill. This project began as a result of the need to help students from failing in school and life. There have been a number of students who have not made adequate grade requirements and therefore were unable to continue to attend the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School. At the root of this problem are the parents who have not committed to being a part of their child's life and school. Parents simply have not held up their end of the bargain. This researcher understands that other factors contribute to students' failure; however, parental involvement is at the top of the list.

A letter was sent to a select number of parents, through their child, inviting them to be a part of a focus group. Of the twelve letters that were sent, seven responded

acknowledging an interest, three indicated they were not interested, and two did not respond at all.

The Problem Statement

This project addresses the importance and need for parents to become involved in the life of their child and school. Of course the writer cannot attribute this problem only to parents. Administrators and teachers have failed to communicate with parents, invite them into the school, and include them in major decision making issues. This problem is by no means a one-way street. The school has given each family a resolution to sign which outlines the commitment parents and students must make to the school and the commitment the school must make to the families. The writer has discovered that less than 5% of the parents are completing or attempting to complete the required service hours to the school and their child. As the research has shown, if parents are not involved it is hard for students to matriculate through high school. The writer has found that there is a correlation between parents who do not complete service hours and their child's failure to meet the academic requirements at Charles A. Tindley.

Involvement

Historically, parental involvement in the school system has been a significant issue. Across the United States there have been a number of proposals that highlight the importance of parents being involved in the life of their child and school.

The focus of these programs has been to find methods of success that can transform parents and children alike. Research continuously shows that student achievement is low when parents do not participate in the educational life of the student.

The approach for this project has been to highlight parental involvement through covenant keeping. Parents sign a document acknowledging the support of the school in educating their child; however, most parents rarely fulfill their part of the covenant. The writer found that the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School had less than 3% of the parents who completed the fifty hours of required service to the school.

To try and improve the above mentioned statistics, the writer designed a series of workshops entitled "Keeping Your Promise: Empowering Parents to be Involved in the Life of Their Child and School" providing support for parents who are unsure of how to uphold their covenant responsibilities. These workshops concentrated on proving to the participant that God is an initiator and supporter of covenants. Covenants are not just man's way but also God's way.

The Project Objective

The objective of this project was to design and implement a new school parent, teacher, administrator, and student covenant that will help parents to commit to the importance of being involved in the life of their child and school. Awareness and knowledge has been a staple for successful human beings. The participants should be able to understand the content of the covenant and the purpose it has in the life of their child and school. The focus group sessions allowed the participants to glean information from lectures and discussion of the importance of covenant keeping and parent involvement.

The lectures provided a working environment for the participants which allowed participants to convey their thoughts and share unique experiences. The conclusions drawn from the focus group may help to foster a social justice and activism conscience amongst Christian families. The opportunity to be an agent of change may be clearer after the focus group has completed its work.

The Hypothesis

The writer believes that the frequency of student promotion, quality of student work, and confidence in a student's abilities would be guaranteed based on the commitment of parents in the educational life of their children.

One of the ways success can be measured is by classroom grades and the passing of the state's standardized test for graduation purposes. The writer desires to develop an awareness of the lack of parental involvement for the advancement of the students of the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School. The problem in this context is the lack of parental involvement after families have signed a resolution (covenant) expressing their commitment to the educational process by devoting fifty or more hours of service to the school. The writer further expects the focus group to write a covenant, using language which is clear and inviting.

Research Method

The project consists of small group of parents, who has students with grades less than desirable. Also attending the focus group, as representatives of the school are a

teacher and an administrator. The parent's help to formulate language that will help them understand the importance of their commitment to the resolution. Also parents will be shown the best way to be involved in the life of their child and the school. The teachers and administrators act as agents of change through a different communication model for families of the school. The writer is designing a pre-test and post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of the focus group utilizing Qualitative Research Methods.

As one who has struggled in the educational process due to the lack of parental involvement, this writer recognizes the need for adults to lead and guide the educational process. The writer believes that the middle and high school experience can help to shape the cognitive processes of each student at the next level of educational achievement, community involvement, and community building. The pre-test will examine the focus group participates thoughts and effects of the current resolution, the invitingness of the schools administration, and the type of communication received from the teaching staff. The writer resolves to guide the conversation of the focus group toward the determination of the validity of the current resolution and how would group change the resolution where they would be willing to carry out what they themselves have promised to do. Also what would the parents of the group participants do differently with changes from the administration and the teaching staff?

Evaluation

Two context associates and one outsider have evaluated the data. To preserve the confidentiality of the group participants and to stay in covenant with the focus group all the identities of the focus group participants had to be concealed. The context associates

and the outsider were puzzled as to why anyone would sign something so important and not take the time to comprehend it. The researcher found the feedback from the context associates interesting. The context associates seem to be unaware of the barriers facing parents. Both thanked the researcher for sharing the information. The research was also reviewed by one of the researcher's professional associates. The professional associate has had the privilege of working with teenage students for more than fifteen years. He did caution the researcher about having such a small sample to glean information from. The information reviewed proved to be helpful and insightful. He said that no one has ever approached this subject from the covenant keeping and making parents aware of what they promised to do and holding them accountable for helping their children accomplish their goals. He said most schools and teachers have written parents off and determined that they (schools and teachers) are on their own.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS OF THE COVENANT KEEPING WORKSHOP

The purpose of this model in ministry was to develop a social justice and political activism consciousness through emphasizing covenant keeping in parental involvement in the life of their child and school. In this chapter the researcher discusses what happened during the actual implementation of the project. It also discusses the data collection methods used and the data analysis objectives of the project. Finally, the results of the model will be discussed in the chapter.

Results of Recruitment

After obtaining permission from the Principal and CEO of the school, the researcher partnered with the administration to identify candidates who would benefit from the project. Upon identifying candidates, a letter was mailed to parents inviting them to be a part of the project. The letter was sent to twelve families, of which six responded to the invitation as follows: four indicated they would participate, one declined because they did not see the benefit of the group, and one initially accepted and subsequently declined. The remaining six parents never responded to the invitation. After the group was confirmed, a date was set for the first session: Tuesday, April 17, 2007, from 6pm-8pm. The researcher had access to 200 families. There is a small sample of the population represented in this study because upon discussion with the

administration of Charles A. Tindley it was identified the families who might benefit the most. The researcher believed that all the parents would participate and therefore sent enough letters out to fill the group.

Results of Four Covenant Keeping Workshops

Workshop One

The researcher arrived one half-hour earlier than the start time in the hopes that he might cultivate an environment of learning and fellowship. However, only two participants arrived to the session on-time. There were thirteen participants who attended. Once the entire group arrived the researcher opened the session in prayer.

The attendance for each session was recorded and videotaped. The researcher discussed the purpose of the group and why they were extended an invitation to participate. The researcher spoke about the importance of the project to all persons involved. The researcher then required the participants to sign a Respondent Agreement, Non-Disclosure Agreement, and Intent to Use Agreement (Appendix C). These items were vital to the success of the focus group. The confidentiality of the students, their families, and the school, the importance of adhering to stick internet policies, as well as the concern that this was a legitimate study necessitated that the researcher requires the above forms. Following the signing and collection of the aforementioned documents, the researcher preceded to hand out the outline for that day's session (Appendix F). The researcher gave each participant a notebook to be used for the purpose of journaling. The participants were also given a folder to keep their hand-outs secure.

The researcher explained why this study and the participants were provided a list of statistics about parent involvement. The researcher shared information in reference to studies that have been conducted to show the importance of parental involvement in teenage years. However, there were no studies linking parent involvement to covenant keeping. After sharing this information, the researcher gave a pre-test questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to gather baseline data about each participant. This data would give the researcher essential information about each participant as it related to the knowledge each person possessed in terms of accountability and the school resolution/covenant. The researcher observed the participants in their attempt to discover if there was a right or wrong answer.

Results of the Pre-Test

As previously stated above, the participants were asked to complete the pre-test. The pre-test investigated the commitment of involvement from the participants. The results of the pre-test are as follows:

The group consisted of 99% African-American and 1% Caucasian. Of 6 participants, 6 (100%) were adults. Of the 6 participants 4 (66.7%) were parents, 1 (16.6%) was a teacher and 1 (16.6%) was an administrator of the school. The 4 parents were all single parents. 2 were single as a result of divorce, 1 was a widow and 1 never married. Of the 4 parents 25% were male and single.

Question number one identified the number of participants who remembered that Charles A. Tindley has a Family Resolution/Covenant. Out of 6 participants, 5 (83.3%)

remembered that Tindley has a Family Resolution/Covenant. The remaining 1 (16.7%) did not remember that Tindley has a Family Resolution/Covenant.

Question number two identified the number of participants who knew the wording, meaning, and expectations stipulated in the covenant. Out of 6 participants, 5 (83.3%) claimed to know what the Family Resolution/Covenant said when they signed. The remaining 1 (16.7%) did not know what the resolution/covenant said.

Question number three identified the participants who signed the Family Resolution/Covenant. Out of 6 participants, 5 (83.3%) said they signed the Family Resolution/Covenant. The remaining 1 (16.7%) said they did not sign the Family Resolution/Covenant. It was determined during 2nd workshop session that all of the participants signed the Family Resolution/Covenant.

Question number four identified at what level the participants comprehended the Family Resolution/Covenant. Out of 6 participants, 3 (50%) said that the Family Resolution/Covenant was simple to comprehend, 3 (50%) said the Family Resolution/Covenant was somewhat difficult to comprehend, and 0 (0%) said the Family Resolution/Covenant was difficult to comprehend.

Question number five identified how many years each participant has been a part of the Charles A Tindley Accelerated School. Out of 6 participants, 4 (66.7%) has been a part of the Tindley School for 3 years, 2 (33.3%) had been a part of the Tindley School for 2 years and 0 (0%) had been a part of the Tindley School for 1 year.

Question number six identified the participants who bring their child to school on-time. Out of 4 parents, 2 (50%) of them said they bring their child to school on-time. Of the 2 parents who said they bring their child to school on-time, 1 (50%) of them said they

bring their child to school on-time all the time, and 1 (50%) parent said they bring their child to school on-time most of the time. The remaining 2 (50%) parents said they do not bring their child to school on-time all the time nor most of the time.

Question number seven identified how many volunteer hours each family has completed. Out of 6 participants, 3 (50%) have completed fifty hours or more, 1 (16.6%) have completed more than 25 hours of service to the Tindley School. The remaining 2 (33.3 %) participants were exempt from this question.

Question number eight identified the parents who may or may not send their child to school everyday with the proper school uniform. Out of 6 participants, 4 (66.7%) said they send their child to school everyday in full uniform. Of the 4, 3 (75%) said they send their child to school in full uniform all the time and 1 (25%) said they send their child to school in full uniform most of the time. The remaining 2 participants were not eligible to answer this question.

Question number nine identified the participants who volunteer at the Charles A. Tindley School. Out of 6 participants, 4 (66.7%) said they volunteer at the Charles A. Tindley School, of which 3 (75%) said they volunteer all the time, 1 (25%) said they volunteer most of the time. The remaining 2 participants are not eligible to answer this question.

Question number ten identified those parents who help their child with homework. Out of 4 parents, 3 (75%) said they help their child with homework sometimes, 1 (25%) said they help with homework all the time.

After each participant completed the pre-test, the researcher collected the documents and moved into the next part: A Working Definition of Covenant. The

researcher believed the participants wouldn't fully understand and grasp a definition from the dictionary. Therefore, the participants crafted a working definition of a covenant. Prior to this definition being agreed upon the group debated about commitment vs. agreement. As a result of this discussion about the definition of covenant the following was agreed upon by the group: a covenant is *an agreement/promise/commitment between two or more parties.*

The researcher posed a question to the group; "How often do we really think about covenant"? Also, "How often do we believe we are in a covenant relationship"? The researcher explained to the group the importance of knowing what one is a part of, that one might govern themselves accordingly. One of the participants said, "If we know and become more informed about the covenant relationships we are a part of then we can make sure they work". The researcher asked the group what are some covenants one does not normally think of as a covenant? The following was listed:

- Parenting
- Meeting time
- Child to school
- Teacher to student
- Parent to parent
- Constitution of the united states
- Voting
- Paying taxes
- Teacher to teacher

A question was asked of the researcher during his Candidacy Review by his mentor; Dr. Claude Alexander. Dr. Alexander asked, "What makes your project Christian"? The researcher asked the participants the same question. What makes this project Christian? Before they could answer, the researcher shared them the answer he gave to Dr. Alexander during his Candidacy Review. The researcher said, "The people in the focus group are Christians. The participants said that their lifestyle and their relationship with Jesus help to characterize this project as Christian.

The group proceeded to analyze the current family covenant, which changed its name from resolution to covenant at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year (Appendix I). Of the four parents present in the group, only three of the parents were able to say that they read the family resolution/covenant prior to signing. Participant 1 said she really read the document before signing. Participant 2 said she read it and marked out a couple of things before signing the document. Participant 3 said she just wanted her child to attend the school. Participant 4 said he did not read it nor does he remember signing it; but knew he was going to be involved. Participant 1 said that parents may have read it but didn't fully comprehend what they were reading. The administrator echoed that people get caught into "that sounds like a good idea" and not really knowing what the commitment really is.

Parent # 3 said the attendance policy in the covenant is not the same attendance policy in the Charles A. Tindley Student/Parent Handbook. The rest of the group acknowledged the same, as did the researcher. Parent #1 says rules are changed and made up from day to day. Parent #1 also believes rules are made up for certain students and only punishable for that/those student(s). Shortly after this discussion on following

the rules the researcher ended the session. The researcher asked one of the parents to provide food for the next workshop, for which she agreed, and then the researcher prayed and dismissed the participants. The participants were asked to leave their folders on the tables, so they will have them for the next workshop.

Workshop Two

The researcher arrived thirty minutes earlier to prepare the room for the workshop and make any copies needed for the workshop. The researcher also set up the video camera for observing the workshop. At the beginning of workshop two the participants ate dinner. Once again, participants were late coming to the workshop. As a result, the session began at 6:45pm instead of 6pm.

The researcher opened the workshop with prayer. After prayer, the researcher reiterated to the group how important this project is to the completion of this doctoral program and the researcher needed them to be on-time. Following this plea to the participants the researcher began to recap workshop number one. One question of significance was what was the working definition of Covenant? The participants were able to articulate their working definition of covenant. The researcher noticed parent #1 seemed to be uninterested as parent #1 glanced several times at their phone. The researcher gave each participant a copy of their previous covenant signed upon entrance to the school. The families had covenants ranging from 2004-05 and 2005-06 (Appendix I).

After a closer review of the signed family resolutions/covenants, one parent found that the administration failed to sign her covenant. This made the resolution not valid.

This discovery was made during the workshop session. The signature lines for the mother and son were filled in; however the signature line for the school representative did not have a signature. The group continued to discuss the family resolution/covenant line by line to glean information that will help to change to the document. The group became very interested in the wording and overall effectiveness of the covenant. Students found several flaws with their support of the covenant. Some of them found that they were constantly breaking the covenant relationship. Parents agreed that they were upholding their commitment to the covenant. The teacher and administrator also agreed that the school did not fully covenant with the families. The group held a healthy discussion about parental involvement and covenant keeping. The researcher observed parents and educators enjoying the opportunity to grow with each other. This workshop opened up the eyes of the participants as some admitted to the researcher that they could have functioned better knowing the particulars of personal responsibility to covenant keeping.

Workshop Three

The researcher arrived thirty minutes before start time to set the room up for workshop three. There were some members of the group who were late. The workshop began fifteen minutes late. The on-time participants enjoyed dinner. This workshop highlighted what the Bible says about parenting, covenants, and education. The participants were given a handout on covenant (Appendix G). The first scripture the group was able to glean information from was Gen 9:1-17. The participants discussed the three parts to the covenant in Gen 9; (1) Never again will a flood do such destruction, (2) As long as the earth remains the seasons will always come as expected and

(3) A rainbow will be visible when it rains as a sign to all that God will keep His promises. The participants mentioned that they were very comfortable discussing their belief inside the school building. The participants also garnered information from Genesis 12. The researcher observed the participants showing interest as they engaged in this meaningful dialogue. In chapter 12 of Genesis we notice the following: (1) God did not form the covenant until He knew that Abram could be trusted, (2) God asked Abram to pick up and leave his place of comfort and (3) Abram did not act like he knew it all. One of the parents helped the group to understand that if Abram was not obedient to God then all that God gave him perhaps would have taken longer to give it to him. In the New Testament the group discussed Luke 22. The chapter offered information about God and humanity and they established that because sin separated man from God that Jesus had to come with a new covenant between God and man. The researcher asked if there were any questions. Seeing that there were no questions, the researcher closed with prayer. The researcher asked the group to continue to journal and leave all materials on the tables.

Workshop Four

The researcher arrived thirty minutes before the workshop began. Dinner was served on-time and the participants were on-time. While dinner was being served the researcher answered questions about the scriptures from the previous workshop. The participants let the researcher know how much they appreciate the opportunity to study God's word with their children. After dinner the researcher opened in prayer. The researcher passed out the lessons for the day.

The first lesson established a biblical foundation for covenant relationship. The researcher led a discussion about parents and education. The researcher began to read Proverbs 1:1-9, as the text revealed to the group that parents are role models to their children. The discussion continued their actions affect their child (ren), whether positive, negative, or indifferent. If parents only did what the law requires them to do there are things students would not have based upon the law. The workshop participants concluded that God desires that they teach their children. Education starts with parents. The researcher shared with the group that a parent's responsibility is enormous; God requires and desires parents to be responsible for their child's education then God gives you what you need to do what God has equipped you to do. Parenting is a skill acquired through having children. Parenting is in partnership with God and is a path to God and not a curse from God. God is the giver of life and every good and perfect thing. The researcher asked each family to re-write the school family covenant. This covenant should have information they are willing to covenant with and what they believe other parents of the Tindley are willing to covenant. The researcher asked all the participants to turn in their journals and the new covenant within one week.

Results of Biblical and Theological Questionnaire

As previously mentioned, the researcher asked participants to complete a biblical and theological questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to look into the biblical and theological beliefs of participants. Here are the results of the questionnaire:

The group consisted of 99% African-American and 1% Caucasian. Out of 6 participants, 6 were adults. Of the 6 participants 4 were parents, 2 were educators.

The 4 parents were all single parents. 2 were single by way of divorce, 1 was a widow and 1 never married. Of the 4 parents 25% were male and single.

Question number one identified the participant's belief of God wanting them to be an involved parent. All 6 (100%) believe that God wants them to be an involved parent.

Question number two identified the participants who believed that God wanted them to flourish as a parent. All 6 (100%) participants believed that God wanted them to flourish as a parent.

Question number three identified the participants who believed that bad parenting is a demonic spirit. Out of 6 participants, 4 (66.7%) said they believe that bad parenting is demonic spirit, 1 (16.6%) said they did not believe bad parenting is a demonic spirit and 1 (16.6%) participants were undecided.

Question number four identified the participants who believed that bad parenting is due to lack of training. Out of 6 participants 4 (66.7%) believe bad parenting is due to lack of training, 0 (0%) participants said they do not believe that bad parenting is due to lack of training, and 2 (33.3%) participants are undecided.

Question number five identified the participants who believe parenting their child is up to God. Out of 6 participants, 1 (16.6%) believe parenting their child is up to God, 5 (83.3%) participants said parenting their child is not up to God, and 0 (0%) are undecided.

Question number six identified participants who believe parenting their child is up to God and the parent. Out of 6 participants, 6 (100%) believe parenting their child is up to God and the parent.

Question number seven identified participants who believe the Bible alone hold the answers to parenting. Out of 6 participants, 5 (83.3%) believe the Bible alone hold the answer to parenting, 0 (0%) participants say the Bible alone does not hold the answer to parenting, and 1 (16.6%) were undecided.

Question number eight identified participants who believe they are in covenant with God. Out of 6 participants 4 (66.7%) believe they are in covenant with God, 1 (16.6%) participant does not believe they are in covenant with God, and 1 (16.6) did not know.

Question number nine identified participants who believe the Bible tells one how to handle a covenant. Out of 6 participants, 5 (83.3%) believe the Bible tells one how to handle a covenant, and 1 (16.6%) was undecided.

Question number ten identified the participants who believe they are in covenant with their child's school even if they do not sign a document. Out of 6 participants, 4 (66.7%) believe they are in covenant with their child's school even if they do not sign a document, and 1 (16.6%) participant does believe they are in covenant with their child's school even if they do not sign a document and 1 (16.6%) are undecided.

Results of Post-Test and Exit Interview

In conclusion, the workshop proved to be helpful to the writer. The post-test gave the participants an opportunity to answer questions with a better certainty because they had gleaned information from the workshop. A larger number of the participants 80 % were able to say they understood the contents in the resolution/covenant which is up 20% from the beginning of the workshop. Parents also took the opportunity to reacquaint

themselves with the homework table as the writer found 13% said they help with homework all the time.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

In the state of Indiana an emerging problem continues to worsen; the high school drop-out rate of African-Americans is among the highest in the United States. Young African-American men are failing to graduate from high school. Socially, this presents a problem because education is a large component of the definition of success in the United States. Without a high school diploma, it is likely that one will not be a productive citizen and possibly would turn to criminal activity to survive in the capitalist society of the United States.

Education reform has long since been part of political agendas, from localized precincts to the Presidency of the United States of America. Many have tried and to incorporate new ideas with old data. Their attempt has brought failure and shame to the educational system. There are those, however, succeeding in the struggle to educate young black people across America.

Parental involvement has been a problem which political and societal leaders have tried to fix with a band-aid. Someone has decided what is best for a parent and his or her child without educating the parent or the child about the importance of parental efforts.

This doctoral project was formulated subsequent to an analysis of the context of the ministry of an urban accelerated charter school and its Dean of Students' advocacy for the families served. The school is midway through its third year of academic

preparation and yet there is a continued pattern of parents who refuse to be involved in the life of their child and school. It is a defining moment for the school, as the third year review will highlight areas of concern that may impact student success. These areas are two-fold, both those of which Tindley administration and faculty can change (i.e., rigor in the classroom can be adjusted by means of altering curriculum) and that which Tindley administration has less control over, due to variables out of their control (i.e., parent willingness to volunteer and become involved).

The need to empower parents to be involved in the life of their child and school is the core of this paper. The focus group assembled to help solve the growing number of students who were unsupported by family members. It was the researcher's goal to help parents acknowledge the influential role they play in the progression of the school as well as their child.

The point of emphasis became clear after many students continued to be unsupported with school activities, weekly progress reports, and grades that were falling on a daily basis. The school's success or lack thereof, is monumental to the citizens of Indianapolis. It will require Christian parents to get on board with education.

The research methodology was qualitative research of the focus group. A pre-test and post-test questionnaire was used with a series of workshop sessions serving as the treatment. The research proved to be effective as a process of transformation. The four-week program and completed questionnaire qualified distinct changes in attitude and understanding concerning social justice and political activism issues and the biblical, historical, and theological foundation for this mandate of parental involvement and covenant keeping. The sample group was composed of 6 participants.

The group included parents, an administrator and a teacher all of the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School. Generally, they expressed a willingness to participate and were committed to the long-term nature of the project. Each participant completed an information sheet. This information helped to provide the researcher with some demographical information by age, grade, gender, employment, and community involvement.

The responses from the pre-test suggest most of the participants have knowledge of the Family Resolutions/Covenants existence. The process of working through an understanding of Parental Involvement and Covenant Keeping proved to be an effective method of transformation of attitude and understanding.

The workshops were a tool that addressed the key components of an effective parental involvement covenant. There was an acceptance of the biblical mandate to be in covenant relationship interwoven with the historical and theological foundation and relevance of the African-American Christian Family in concert with education.

The participants were all attempting to understand exactly what the workshop was about and why they were being asked to meet with the Dean of Students. Most of the group did not see the workshops as a priority in their lives; although certainly, the group enjoyed meeting and receiving information and having the opportunity to converse about an issue facing their families. Many participants were involved on extra-curricular activities. The researcher became quite frustrated with the lack of disregard of the importance of the project.

The post-test was given to each family individually during an exit interview. The researcher was able to gather all the thoughts about the project and the effects it had on

their families. The post-test allowed the researcher to know that the workshop was informative and that the participants did pay attention and put some cognitive into creating a new Family Covenant. The researcher found that eyes were opened about the lack of parental involvement that exists, even with those who claimed to be more than they were.

The full impact of the group's education and training is still a work in progress. Nevertheless, the participants have clearly developed a greater appreciation for social justice and political activism by way of being empowered to be involved in the life of their child and school.

While the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School may serve as a model for other charter and public schools interested in bringing together parents, educators adopting a stronger activism component in Covenant Keeping, there are some cautions and lessons that should be learned from this experience. First, when looking to serve a large population of people, it is better to screen the focus group invitees. No one should be begged or coerced to participate in the focus group. Secondly, the focus group must commit to the project in its entirety: when, where, and how. Additionally, there should be a recorder who writes information on a flip chart. Lastly, the researcher should do a better job of communicating time restraints to group participants.

Despite the success of the project, there are areas of research that could have been done differently to improve the overall quality of the research and training. It is in hindsight that these suggestions are made and will be incorporated into a formal training model for future use and implementation.

I. The four-week series of workshops should be increased to six sessions. The focus group received a lot of information in a short period of time and was asked to analyze and incorporate it into their understanding. The sessions did not provide a large opportunity for personal reflection and exchange of ideas as a group with a facilitator unrelated to the project.

II. The researcher should have invited other clergy and teachers to come and address the group. The study group was composed of Christians and it would have been interesting to hear a different perspective about education, covenant keeping, and parental involvement from other spiritual and community leaders.

III. The focus group should have had the opportunity to present their findings and understanding about parental involvement to the Board of Directors. Often the parents are not taken seriously because they do not allow their voices to be heard at the Board meetings.

Historically, the schoolhouse has been a place of privilege. However, that was when the school officials went beyond concerns for simply making sure children could read, write and do arithmetic. A new understanding of academic success requires a paradigm shift on the part of all parties engaged. This shift includes: allowing the entire family to be a part of the educational process, ensuring that all children learn, seeing those not learning as having support, and recognizing all of these components as synonymous to social justice and political activism. The researcher acknowledges that all parents aren't as receptive to accepting advice and suggestions. These are challenges the researcher is

willing to suffer through to combat the number one problem in the researcher's opinion of all schools: PARENTS.

In the exit interviews with the families, the researcher found that all of the parents would like the opportunity to sign a new covenant each school year. When the writer asked why, the consensus was that it reminds them what they are responsible for doing and what they should expect from themselves as well as their children. When asked how important is it that the teachers make sure there child learns, all of the families said they should do their part first before the teacher is held accountable. When asked are you willing to say the teacher and school should never be held accountable for their child's learning, all of the families said no. They agreed that the responsibility falls on everyone.

In conclusion, the research has gained a lot of insight and passion for this subject matter. At the beginning of this program the researcher was very excited and nervous. Becoming an agent of change is a spiritual moment. The researcher cannot express enough the importance of people helping one another. The researcher has observed that African-American parents rarely are able to do things together. Who knows why this is; the bottom line is that the families in all communities are dying from a lack of effort and knowledge. How hard is it to walk into a school and ask questions about a child? Apparently it is very difficult for a lot of people. According to the researcher, parents devote minimal time to their children within the confines of the school building.

The researcher has also found that the school is uninviting to parents. Although the administrators and teachers say please come and talk to me, there is a sense of skepticism and anxiety. Parents do not feel welcome inside the Tindley School. One parent told the researcher that they feel talked down to whenever speaking with someone

in the front office. Another parent shared that they do not have enough education to talk with the teachers and they feel like the teachers talk over their head all the time. There are many more parents who would probably express the same sentiments. This is why covenant relationships are so important. These relationships cause all parties involved to look at themselves and find out what they can do to make sure they are adhering to the language and letter of the agreement. The researcher believes if anyone should make sure they are in covenant relationship, it is Christians. Essentially, God desires for us to be in covenant with God and man.

APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP INVITE LETTER

Charles A. Tindley
ACCELERATED SCHOOL

To The Parent(s) of _____

Dear Parent(s),

I am writing you this letter in hopes of obtaining you and your child's input. I am currently a candidate for a Doctoral Degree. I am in the research and dissertation stage of my program. My data that I must collect for my research has to come from Tindley parents, students, teachers and administration. I have prayerfully compiled a list of parents and students who would be vital to the completion of my project and of course you are on the list. You do not have to do anything that will cause stress on your life (I have enough for everyone) but, you will need to give me about 6 to 8 hours of your time over the course of about 3 or 4 meetings. If you are willing to help, please contact to me for more details at 317-538-5012.

As always, I am at your disposal for any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Ramon L. Batts, M.Div.
Dean of Students/Athletic Director

APPENDIX B

CONTEXT ASSOCIATES

Context Associates

Sharifa Batts

Hope Rias

Darrian Reddick

Kathy Holmes

Nickola Campbell

William Durham

Patrick Terry

Daphne Robinson

Kim Williams

Marcus Robinson

Siri Loescher

George Barnes

Nakia Douglas

Roxanne Merriweather

APPENDIX C

DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS

KEEPING YOUR PROMISE: EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN LIFE OF THEIR CHILD AND SCHOOL

Respondent Participation Agreement

Welcome! Please read the following. By signing, you acknowledge that you have read, understand and agree to the following.

1. **Participation:** I have volunteered for this research study and understand that I am **not** receiving compensation to discuss my opinions an ideas related to certain subjects, products, or services. Any opinions or ideas expressed by me in conjunction with this research and interview are the property of Ramon L. Batts and may be used without restriction.

2. **Confidentiality:** I recognize and fully understand that any of the concepts, materials, and information shown or discussed during these workshops with Ramon L. Batts is of a confidential nature. Therefore, I agree that both during and after, I will not disclose to anyone any of the information discussed in the workshops and interview. I will not identify the client or the nature of product and will not show or refer to any confidential materials used in this interview.

3. **Privacy:** I have voluntarily provided confidential personal data to Ramon L. Batts. As a condition of my participation, I understand that my comments, identity, and Identifiable Information will be held in confidence and will be available to no one other than Ramon L. Batts.

4. **Recording:** I understand that these workshops may be recorded (audio and video) to video tape, audio tape, or digital format. These recordings will become the property of Ramon L. Batts who is commissioning this study. Recordings will be used only for research purposes and will not be used in sales, marketing, advertising or promotional materials or in any public media without the prior written consent of respondent. Such recordings will be accessible only to the Ramon L Batts, on whose behalf this study is performed.

Name (Print) _____ Signature_____ Date_____

KEEPING YOUR PROMISE: EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN LIFE OF THEIR CHILD AND SCHOOL

Non Disclosure Agreement

I, _____ hereby agree to maintain the confidentiality of information disclosed during this focus group or interview sessions ("Focus Group") observed live or recorded as follows:

1. For purposes hereof, "Confidential Information" shall mean information or material obtained or observed while attending a focus group session conducted by or for the benefit of the recipient hereof. By example and without limitation, Confidential Information includes any and all information concerning techniques, ideas, processes, trade secrets, innovations, discoveries, improvements, research or developments and test results, data, strategies, and forecasts. Information publicly known that is generally employed by the trade at or after the time the undersigned first learns of such information, or generic information or knowledge which the undersigned would have otherwise learned, shall not be deemed part of the Confidentiality Agreement. Also included as confidential is any participant's "Personally Identifiable Information". "Personally Identifiable Information" shall mean a person's identity or information that might reasonably allow identification of the person.

2. All notes, reference materials, memoranda, documentation and records in any way incorporating or reflecting any of the Confidential Information shall belong exclusively to Ramon L. Batts and the undersigned agrees to turn over all copies of such materials in the undersigned's possession to Ramon L. Batts upon request.

3. I shall at all times hold in trust, keep confidential and not disclose to any third party or make any use of the Confidential Information.

4. I shall at all times hold in trust, keep confidential and not disclose to any third party or make any use of the identity or Personally Identifiable Information of any person or persons involved in the Focus Group.

The undersigned agrees to the above terms of this agreement.

Signed_____ Date_____
Printed_____

KEEPING YOUR PROMISE: EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN LIFE OF THEIR CHILD AND SCHOOL

Intent of Use Agreement

Ramon L. Batts is committed to the protection, safeguard, and proper use of confidential and personally identifiable information ("Identifiable Information") collected from persons involved in this research study ("Respondent(s)"). Audio and video recordings (Recordings) made of Respondent interviews contain Identifiable Information. By signing, Ramon L. Batts, (Client) acknowledge that you have read, understand and agree to the following relating to Recordings provided to you by The Facility.

1. **Proper Use of Recordings:** Recordings will be used only for research purposes and will not be used in sales, marketing, advertising or promotional materials or in any public media without the prior written consent of respondent.

2. **Respondent Confidentiality:** The Identifiable Information of all Respondents will be protected from disclosure to anyone other than those involved in the research and analysis of this project. Client will use commercially reasonable efforts to keep the Respondent Identifiable Information as secure as its other confidential and/or protected customer information.

3. **Other Viewers of Recordings:** Any persons legitimately shown or in possession of the Recordings will be informed by The Client of the content and obligations of this agreement.

4. **Statutes & Regulations Governing Identifiable Information:** I understand that it is the responsibility of The Client to comply with all state, federal, and international statues and regulations governing privacy, data security and the use of Identifiable Information.

5. **Respondent Participation Agreement:** I have read the attached "Respondent Participation Agreement" and agree to not violate any portion of the agreement between The Facility and the Respondents.

6. **Responsibility for Misuse:** Client shall indemnify and hold The Facility harmless from and against any and all loss, claim or liability arising out of or related to The Client's misuse of the Respondent Identifiable Information or other breach or violation of this agreement.

Signed on Behalf of: _____
Client Name

Name (Print)	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX D

WORKSHOP PRE AND POST-TEST

KEEPING YOUR PROMISE: EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN LIFE OF THEIR CHILD AND SCHOOL

PRE/POST-TEST QUESTIONS

1. Do you remember that Charles A. Tindley has a Family Covenant?
____YES ____NO

2. Do you know what the resolution says?
____YES ____NO

3. Did you sign the Family Covenant?
____YES ____NO

4. How do comprehend the Family Resolution of Charles A. Tindley School?
____Simple ____Somewhat difficult ____Difficult

5. How long has your child been at Tindley?
____1 Year ____2 Years ____3 Years

6. Do you bring your child to school on time?
___Yes ____No
If so, how often
___Never ___Sometimes ___Most of the time ___All the time

7. How many hours of the 50 have you completed?
___None ___Less than 25 ___More than 25 ___All

8. Does your child come to school in full uniform?
___YES ___NO
If so, How Often
___Never ___Sometimes ___Most of the time ___All the time

9. Do you volunteer at Charles A. Tindley School?
___Yes ___No
If so, How Often
___Never ___Sometimes ___Most of the time ___All the time

10. Do you help with your child's homework?
___Yes ___No
If so, How Often
___Never ___Sometimes ___Most of the time ___All the time

APPENDIX E

BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

KEEPING YOUR PROMISE: EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN LIFE OF THEIR CHILD AND SCHOOL

Biblical/Theological Questionnaire

1. Do you believe God wants you to be an involved Parent?
   Yes or No or Undecided

2. Do you believe God wants you to flourish as a parent?
   Yes or No or Undecided

3. Do you believe that bad parenting is a demonic spirit?
   Yes or No or Undecided

4. Do you believe bad parenting is due to lack of training?
   Yes or No or Undecided

5. Do you believe parenting your child is up to God?
   Yes or No or Undecided

6. Do you believe parenting your child is up to God and the parent?
   Yes or No or Undecided

7. Does the Bible alone hold the answer to parenting?
   Yes or No or Undecided

8. Do you believe you are in covenant with God?
   Yes or No or Undecided

9. Does the Bible tell you how to handle a covenant?
   Yes or No or Undecided

10. Do you believe you are in covenant with your child's school even if you do not sign a document?
    Yes or No or Undecided

APPENDIX F

OUTLINE FOR WORKSHOPS

KEEPING OUR PROMISE: EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN LIFE OF THEIR CHILD AND SCHOOL

WORKSHOPS ONE & TWO

Aim/objective:

- To construct parents to be involved in the life of their child and school by enhancing their level of commitment as parents.

- To empower teachers and administrators to facilitate parent success in and out of school building.

Time Format: Two Hours per Workshop

I. Breaking Down The Current Covenant
   A. Give Pre-test
   B. A Working Definition of Covenant
   C. Review Current Family Covenant
   D. Review of Original Signed Family Resolutions/Covenants
   E. What causes Christians Not to Keep Covenant

II. Breaking Down of Parental Involvement Barriers
   A. Who wants their child to flunk?
   B. A Working Definition of Parent Involvement
   C. What's stopping us?

III. Breaking Down of Relationships
   A. Parent-Student
   B. Teacher-Student
   C. Parent-Teacher

Format: These workshops will be a discussion of the role of the Parent in strengthening the covenant institution, parent involvement and relationship importance; while coming to an understanding of the importance of covenant keeping.

KEEPING YOUR PROMISE: EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN LIFE OF THEIR CHILD AND SCHOOL

WORKSHOPS THREE & FOUR

Aim/Objective:

- To bring Christian parents, students, teacher and administrators to a biblical understanding of their responsibility to God.

I. What can we learn from God's Covenant?
   A. God keeps His promises
   B. Many of God's covenants include us
   C. God's covenants require a personal response
   D. Jesus established a new covenant between us and God
   E. God's new covenant in Christ offers us forgiveness

II. What are God's Expectations of Parent's?
   A. Parents are to be good role models for their children
   B. Parents are to train their children in the art of decision making
   C. Parents are to teach their children the Scriptures
   D. Parents are to train their children in applying the Scriptures
   E. Parents are to seek God's will for their children

III. What is God's desire for education?
   A. We need to be personally involved in our children's training
   B. Children need spiritual roots

Format: These workshops will be a lecture and discussion of the role of the Parent in strengthening the covenant institution, parent involvement and relationship importance through a Biblical and Theological Understanding; while coming to an understanding of the importance of covenant keeping.

APPENDIX G

WORKSHOP HANDOUTS

COVENANT

What can we learn from God's covenants?

BIBLE READING: Genesis 9:1-17
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *God said to Noah, "Yes, this is the sign of my covenant with all the creatures of the earth."* (Genesis 9:17)

God keeps his promises. Noah stepped out of the ark onto an earth devoid of human life. But God gave him a reassuring promise. This covenant had three parts: (1) never again will a flood do such destruction; (2) as long as the earth remains, the seasons will always come as expected; (3) a rainbow will be visible when it rains as a sign to all that God will keep his promises. The earth's order and seasons are still preserved, and rainbows still remind us of God's faithfulness to his Word.

BIBLE READING: Genesis 12:1-9
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *The LORD told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others."* (Genesis 12:1-2)

Many of God's covenants include us. When God called Abram, he moved out in faith from Ur to Haran and finally to Canaan. God then established a covenant with Abram, telling him that he would found a great nation. Not only would this nation be blessed, God said, but the other nations of the earth would be blessed through Abram's descendants. Israel, the nation that would come from Abram, was to follow God and influence those with whom it came in contact. Through Abram's family tree, Jesus Christ was born to save humanity. Through Christ, people can have a personal relationship with God and be blessed beyond measure.

God's covenants require a personal response. God promised to bless Abram and make him great, but there was one condition. Abram had to do what God wanted him to do. This meant leaving his home and friends and traveling to a new land where God promised to build a great nation from Abram's family. Abram obeyed, walking away from his home for God's promise of even greater blessings in the future. God may be trying to lead you to a place of greater service and usefulness for him. Don't let the comfort and security of your present position make you miss God's plan for you.

BIBLE READING: Luke 22:7-23
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This wine is the token of God's new covenant to save you—an agreement sealed with the blood I will pour out for you."* (Luke 22:20)

Jesus established a new covenant between us and God. In Old Testament times, God agreed to forgive people's sins if they brought animals for the priests to sacrifice. When this sacrificial system was inaugurated, the agreement between God and man was sealed with the blood of animals (Exodus 24:8). But animal blood did not in itself remove sin (only God can forgive sin), and animal sacrifices had to be repeated day by day and year after year. Jesus instituted a "new covenant" or agreement between humans and God. Under this new covenant, Jesus would die in the place of sinners. Unlike the blood of animals, his blood (because he is God) would truly remove the sins of all who put their faith in him. And Jesus' sacrifice would never have to be repeated; it would be good for all eternity (Hebrews 9:23-28). The prophets looked forward to this new covenant that would fulfill the old sacrificial agreement (Jeremiah 31:31-34), and John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 8:1-13
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Our High Priest has been given a ministry that is far superior to the ministry of those who serve under the old laws, for he is the one who guarantees for us a better covenant with God, based on better promises.* (Hebrews 8:6)

God's new covenant in Christ offers us forgiveness. This passage contains a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34 and compares the new covenant with the old. The old covenant was the covenant of law between God and Israel. The new and better way is the covenant of grace—Christ's offer to forgive our sins and bring us to God through his sacrificial death. This covenant is new in extent—it goes beyond Israel and Judah to all the Gentile nations. It is new in application because it is written in our hearts and minds. It offers a new way to forgiveness, not through animal sacrifice, but through faith. Have you entered into this new covenant and begun walking in the better way?

—Handbook of Bible Application

PARENT(S)

What are God's expectations for parents?

BIBLE READING: Proverbs 1:1-9
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Listen, my child, to what your father teaches you. Don't neglect your mother's teaching.* (Proverbs 1:8)

Parents are to be good role models for their children. Our actions speak louder than our words. This is especially true in the home. Children learn values, morals, and priorities by observing how their parents act and react every day. If parents exhibit a deep reverence for and dependence on God, the children will catch these attitudes. Let them see your reverence for God. Teach them right living by giving worship an important place in your family life and by reading the Bible together.

BIBLE READING: Numbers 30:1-16
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *Now Moses summoned the leaders of the tribes of Israel and told them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: A man who makes a vow to the LORD or makes a pledge under oath must never break it. He must do exactly what he said he would do."* (Numbers 30:1-2)

Parents are to train their children in the art of decision making. Under Israelite law, parents could overrule their children's vows. This helped young people avoid the consequences of making foolish promises or costly commitments. From this law comes an important principle for both parents and children. Young people still living at home should seek their parents' help when they make decisions. A parent's experience could save a child from a serious mistake. Parents, however, should exercise their authority with caution and grace. They should let children learn from their mistakes, but protect them from disaster.

BIBLE READING: Deut. 6:1-25
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *You must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again.* (Deut. 6:6-7)

Parents are to teach their children the Scriptures. This passage provides the central theme of Deuteronomy. It sets a pattern that helps us relate the Word of God to our daily life. We are to love God, think constantly about his commandments, teach his commandments to our children, and live each day by the guidelines in his Word. God emphasized the importance of parents' teaching the Bible to their children. The church and Christian schools cannot be used as an escape from this responsibility. The Bible provides so many opportunities for object lessons and practical teaching that it would be a shame to study it only one day a week. Eternal truths are most effectively learned in the loving environment of a God-fearing home.

Parents are to train their children in applying the Scriptures. The Hebrews were extremely successful at making religion an integral part of life. The reason for their success was that religious education was life-oriented, not information-oriented. They used the context of daily life to teach about God. The key to teaching your children to love God is stated simply and clearly in these verses. If you want your children to follow God, you must make God a part of your everyday experiences. You must diligently teach your children to see God in all aspects of life, not just those that are church related.

BIBLE READING: Matthew 20:20-28
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *The mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor. "What is your request?" he asked. She replied, "In your Kingdom, will you let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one at your right and the other at your left?"* (Matthew 20:20-21)

Parents are to seek God's will for their children. The mother of James and John asked Jesus to give her sons special positions in his kingdom. Parents naturally want to see their children promoted and honored, but this desire is dangerous if it causes them to lose sight of God's specific will for their children. God may have different work in mind—not as glamorous, but just as important. Thus parents' desires for their children's advancement must be held in check as they pray for God's will to be done in their children's lives.

—Handbook of Bible Application

EDUCATION

What is God's desire for education?

BIBLE READING: Deut. 6:1-9
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *You must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again.* (Deut. 6:6-7)

We need to be personally involved in our children's training. The Hebrews were extremely successful at making religion an integral part of life. The reason for their success was that religious education was life-oriented, not information-oriented. They used the context of daily life to teach about God. The key to teaching your children to love God is stated simply and clearly in these verses. If you want your children to follow God, you must make God a part of your everyday experiences. You must teach your children diligently to see God in all aspects of life, not just those that are church related.

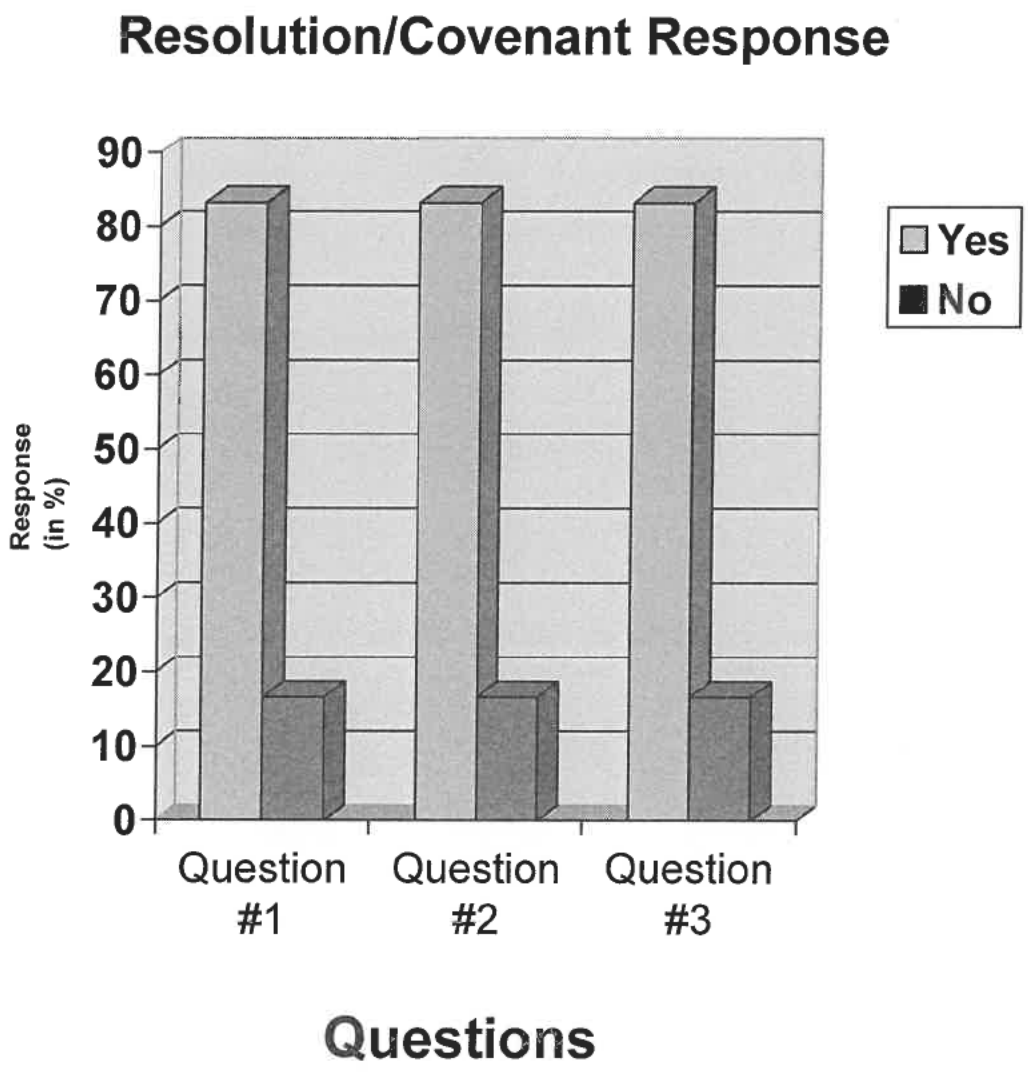
BIBLE READING: Psalm 78:1-8
KEY BIBLE VERSE: *For he issued his decree to Jacob; he gave his law to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them—even the children not yet born—that they in turn might teach their children.* (Psalm 78:5-6)

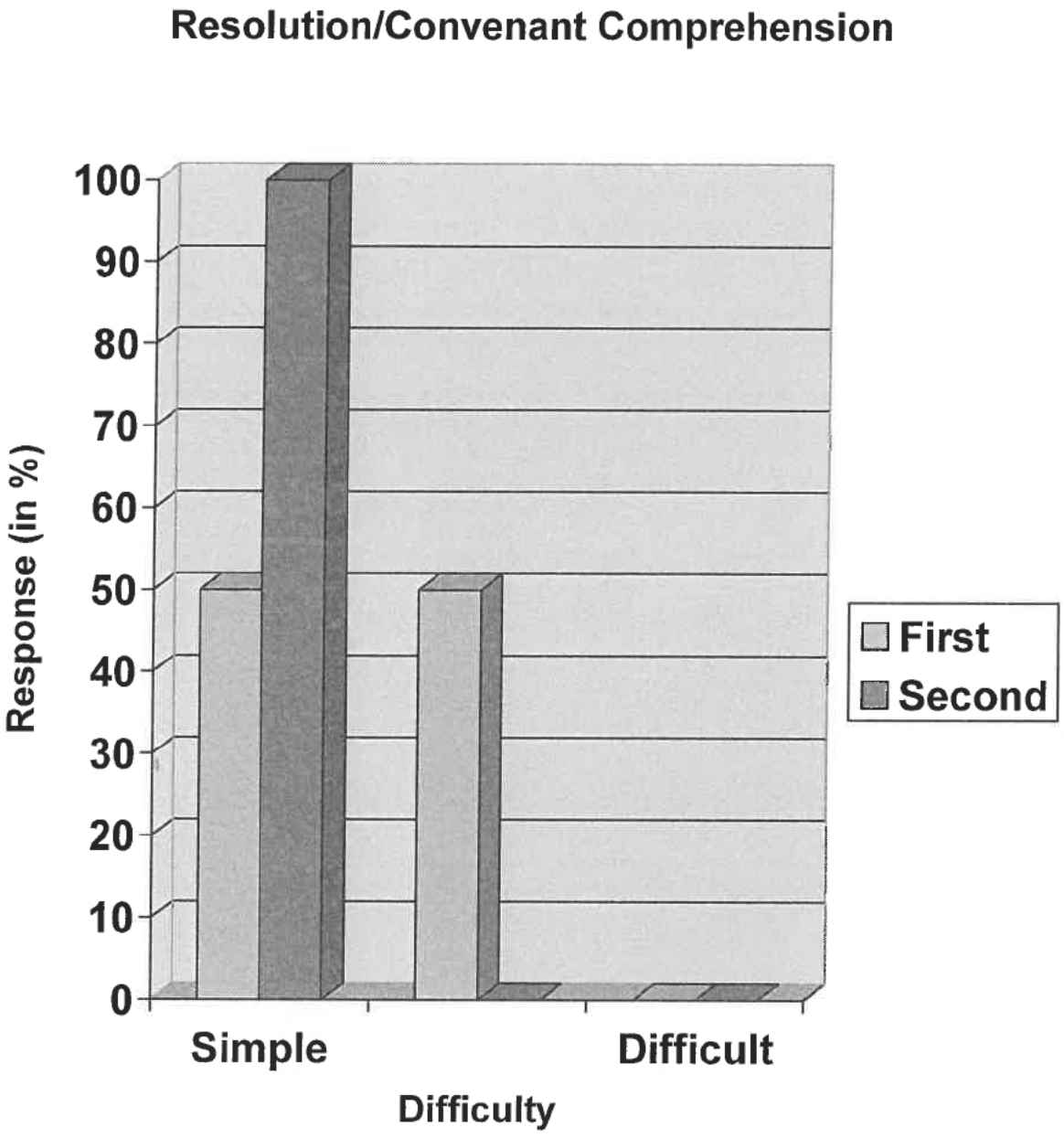
Children need spiritual roots. God commanded that the stories of his mighty acts in Israel's history and his laws be passed on from parents to children. This shows the purpose and importance of religious education—to help each generation obey God and set their hope on him. It is important to keep children from repeating the same mistakes as their ancestors. What are you doing to pass on the history of God's work to the next generation?

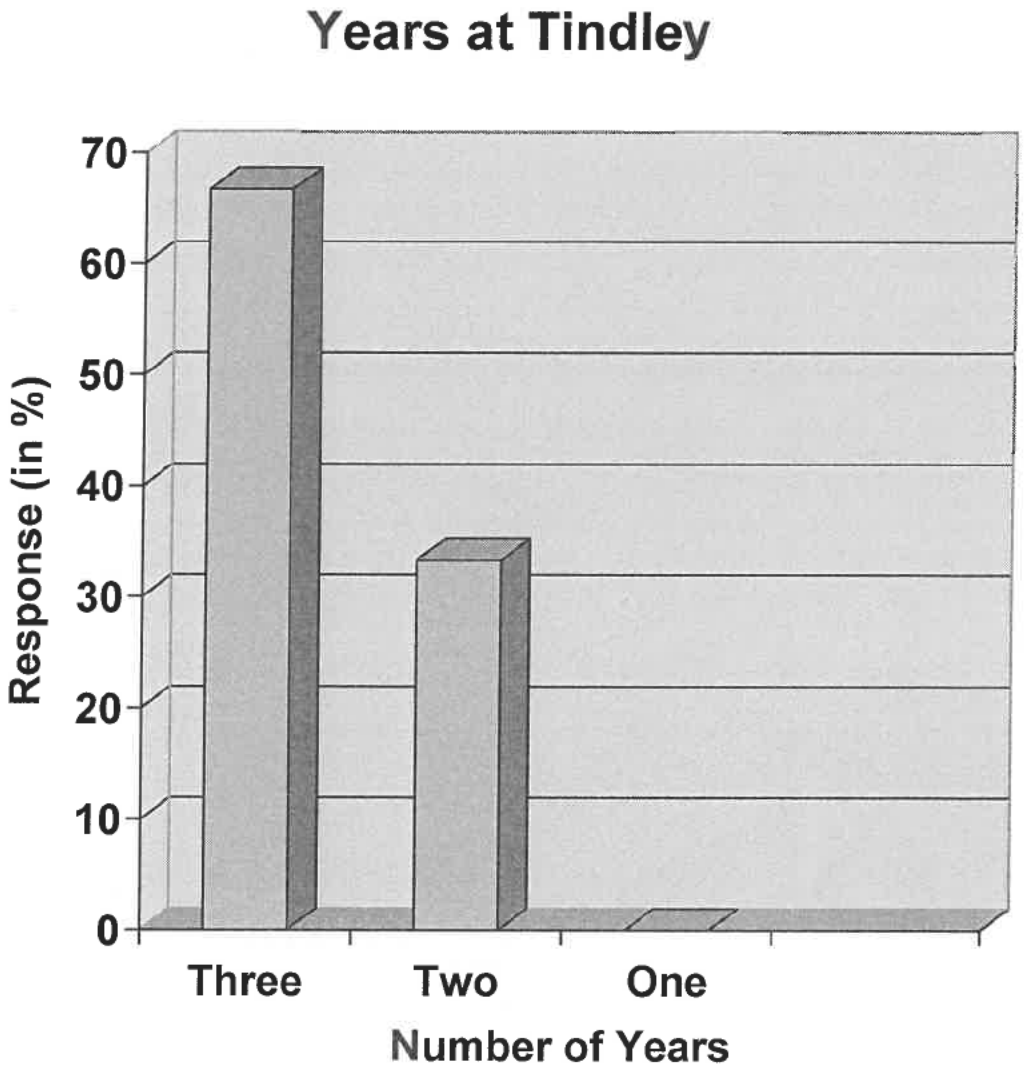
—Handbook of Bible Application

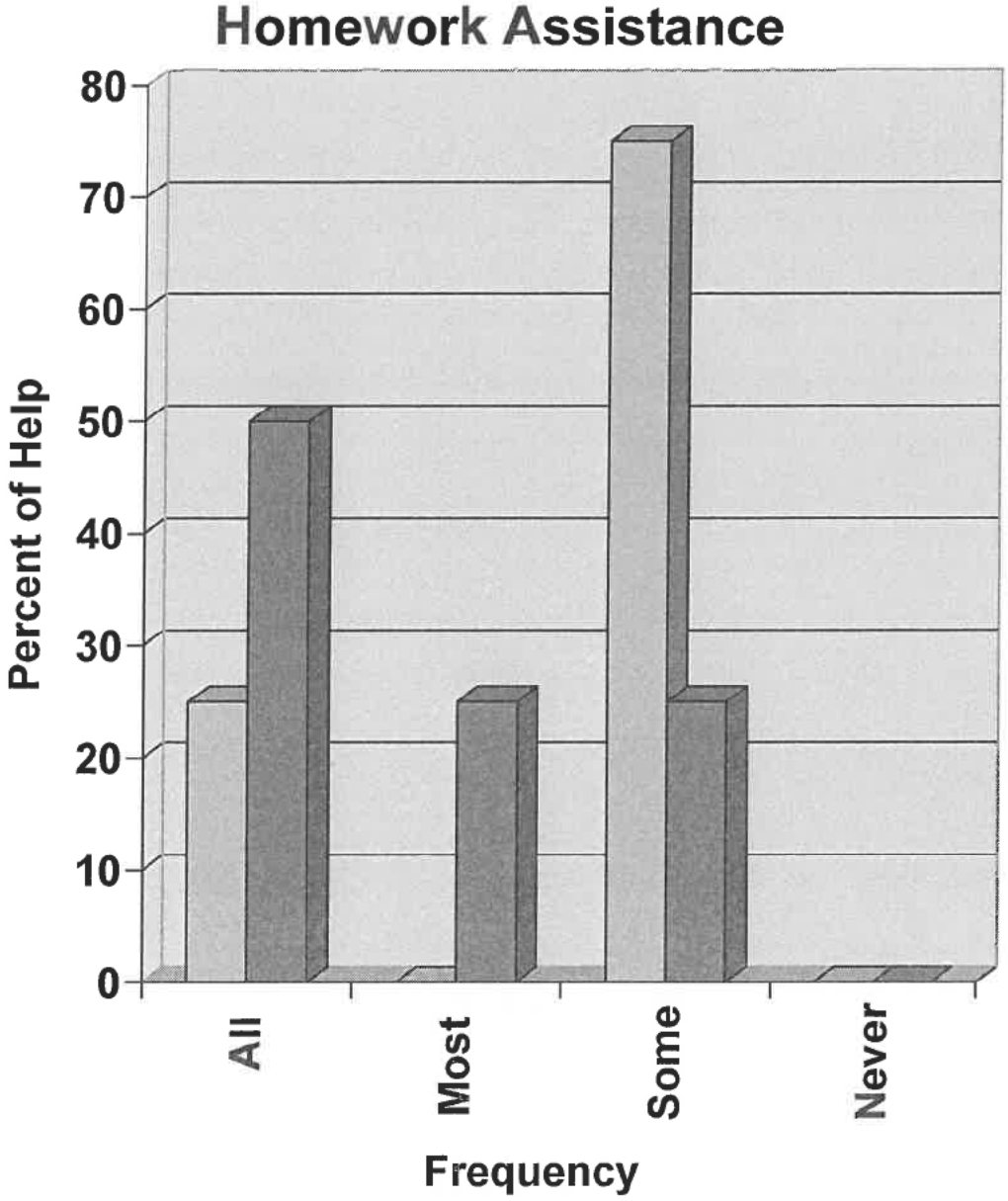
APPENDIX H

RESULTS FROM PRE AND POST-TEST GRAPHS

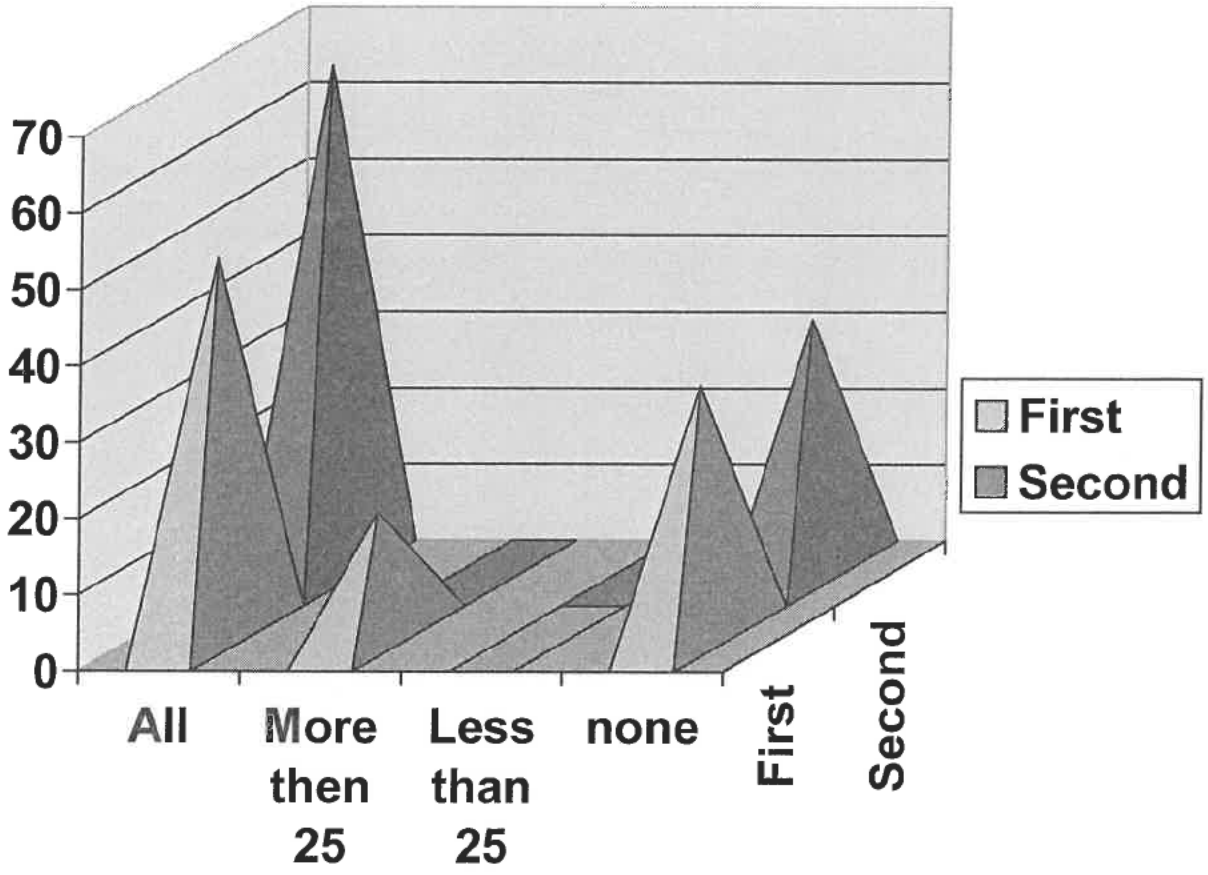

Resolution/Covenant Response
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Response (in %)
Yes
No
Question #1
Question #2
Question #3
Questions


Resolution/Convenant Comprehension
Response (in %)
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Simple
Difficult
Difficulty
First
Second


Years at Tindley
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Response (in %)
Three
Two
One
Number of Years


Homework Assistance
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Percent of Help
All
Most
Some
Never
Frequency

VOLUNTEER HOURS



APPENDIX I

2004 – 2007 FAMILY RESOLUTION/COVENANT

Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School
Family Resolution
2004-2005

WHEREAS, the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School is a college-preparatory school dedicated to the highest levels of student achievement and behavior;

WHEREAS, the success of all students is dependent upon the commitment of each member of the school community; and

WHEREAS, each member of the school community makes a choice to participate in the school;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that each family will commit to the following:

- The success of the student in each class at the Tindley School (no less than a grade of C)
- Adherence to the Dress Code policy each school day
- Attendance at all conferences scheduled with any member of the Tindley School staff
- Total support of all school rules and behavior policies as outlined in the Student Handbook
- 50 hours of family service per school year
- The completion of all school assignments given by Tindley faculty members or their designees(s)
- Seeking additional academic support (outside of school hours) for classes in which the student is struggling
- Maintain a commitment toward seeking a college education
- No more than 3 unexcused absences in a particular term
- Prompt arrival at school each day

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE SCHOOL WILL COMMIT TO:

- Providing a rigorous academic preparation for each student
- Providing extra academic support (outside of school hours) for students who are in need
- Keeping constant communication with parents about their student's schedules

Student Parent Principal/CEO

Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School
Family Resolution
2005-2006

WHEREAS, the Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School is a college-preparatory school dedicated to the highest levels of student achievement and behavior;

WHEREAS, the success of all students is dependent upon the commitment of each member of the school community; and

WHEREAS, each member of the school community makes a choice to participate in the school;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that each family will commit to the following:

- The success of the student in each class at the Tindley School (no less than a grade of C)
- Adherence to the Dress Code policy each school day
- Attendance at all conferences scheduled with any member of the Tindley School staff
- Total support of all school rules and behavior policies as outlined in the Student Handbook
- 50 hours of family service per school year
- The completion of all school assignments given by Tindley faculty members or their designees(s)
- Seeking additional academic support (outside of school hours) for classes in which the student is struggling
- Maintain a commitment toward seeking a college education
- No more than 3 unexcused absences in a particular term
- Prompt arrival at school each day

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE SCHOOL WILL COMMIT TO:

- Providing a rigorous academic preparation for each student
- Providing extra academic support (outside of school hours) for students who are in need
- Keeping constant communication with parents about their student's schedules

Student Parent Principal/CEO

Family Covenant

2006-2007

The Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School (CTAS) is a college-preparatory school dedicated to the highest levels of student achievement and behavior. The success of all students is dependent upon the commitment of each member of the school community. The Tindley school community is comprised of the students, parents, faculty and staff. Each member of the school community makes a choice to participate and fulfill this family covenant.

Attendance

1. I will ensure that my child comes to school every day on time to begin school.
2. I understand that if my child is absent more than 6.5% of his/her school year, he or she will have to repeat his or her grade. For a typical 196-day school year, this would mean that if a student is absent without an excuse for more than 12 days of the school year that student will fail all of his or her class for the year and will need to repeat his or her current grade.
3. I understand that an excused absence always requires contacting the school, and documentation regarding student illness (from a physician), bereavement, or court appearance is necessary if absent for more than 2 days at a time.
4. I understand that the school day ends at 4:15 or 4:30 PM (based on grade level). In the event that he or she is assigned to stay for homework club or requires extra help.

Homework

1. I agree to check my child's homework daily to ensure that it is complete.

Code of Conduct

1. I agree to promote and support the rules of behavior as outlined in the student handbook and accept responsibility as a partner in my child's learning.
2. I understand that it is my child's responsibility to notify me if he or she must stay after school.
3. I understand that my child is suspended if he or she misses a mandatory after school session.
4. I will come to school for a meeting if my child is suspended, and I understand that my child will not be allowed to return to class until after this meeting occurs.

Promotion Policies

1. I understand that my child needs to pass 5 cores academic classes (a core class is any class that meets five times a week) each term in order to be promoted to the next grade.
2. I understand that my child will be automatically retained if he or she fails 1 or more core academic classes.
3. I will ensure that my child attends Saturday school if her or she if failing one or more classes as of the first progress report and any subsequent progress reports or report cards on which my child is failing for the year.
4. I understand that my child may be required to stay for after school extra help or tutoring , and that he or she is urged to take advantage of extra help opportunities provided by teachers.

Student Dress Policy

1. I will ensure that my child comes to school in the school uniform, according to the guidelines listed in the student handbook.

2. I understand that if my child comes to school out of uniform, he or she will not be permitted to attend classes, and he or she will need to wait for the appropriate dress to be brought from home.

Family Support

1. I agree to support my child's academic work by communicating regularly with my child's teachers, by scheduling appointment to talk with them as needed, and by attending all conferences.

2. I agree to attend Family meetings and other school-sponsored events on a regular basis.

3. I agree to commit a minimum of 25 hours to the school, during the school year.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature **Date**

_____ _____

Student Signature **Date**

_____ _____

Principal and CEO Signature **Date**

APPENDIX J

PROPOSED FAMILY COVENANT

Proposed Family Covenant

(YEAR)

Attendance

1. I will ensure that my child comes to school every day on time to begin school.

2. I understand that if my child is absent more than 6.5% of his/her school year, he or she will have to repeat his or her grade. For a typical 196-day school year, this would mean that if a student is absent without an excuse for more than 12 days of the school year that student will fail all of his or her class for the year and will need to repeat his or her current grade.

3. I understand that an excused absence always requires contacting the school, and documentation regarding student illness (from a physician), bereavement, or court appearance is necessary if absent for more than 2 days at a time.

4. I understand that the school day ends at 3:55 or 4:30 PM (based on grade level). In the event that he or she is assigned to stay for homework club or requires extra help, arrangements must be made for no later than the following day. This allowance for arrangements to be made should cut down on the number of students needing to call home after school.

Homework

1. I agree to check my child's homework daily to ensure that it is complete.

2. I agree to sign my child's blue sheet in each box for which my child has a completed assignment.

Code of Conduct

1. I agree to promote and support the rules of behavior as outlined in the student handbook and accept responsibility as a partner in my child's learning.

2. I understand that it is my child's responsibility to notify me if he or she must stay after school. Adequate access to supervised telephone usage will be provided in order to do so, in order to diminish the assumed need for cell phones on school grounds.

3. I understand that my child will be assigned Saturday school, and then a subsequent suspension if he or she misses a mandatory after school session.

4. I will come to school for a meeting if my child is suspended, and I understand that my child will not be allowed to return to class until after this meeting occurs.

Promotion Policies

1. I understand that my child needs to pass each class each trimester in order to be promoted to the next level.

2. I understand that my child will be automatically retained if he or she fails 1 or more core academic classes.

3. I understand that my child may be required to stay for after school extra help or tutoring, and that he or she is urged to take advantage of extra help opportunities provided by teachers. I further understand that my child may be required to attend school on Saturdays.

School Uniform Policy

1. I will ensure that my child comes to school in the school uniform, according to the guidelines listed in the student handbook.

2. I understand that if my child comes to school out of uniform, he or she will not be permitted to attend classes, and he or she will need to wait for the appropriate dress to be brought from home.

Family Support

1. I agree to support my child's academic work by communicating regularly with my child's teachers, by scheduling appointment to talk with them as needed, and by attending all conferences.

2. I agree to attend Family meetings and other school-sponsored events on a regular basis.

I agree to commit a minimum of 25 hours to the school, during the school year.

THE ADMINISTRATION, TEACHERS AND STAFF

1. Covenants to providing a rigorous academic preparation for each student
2. Covenants to provide academic support (outside of school hours) for students who need it
3. Covenants to keep constant communication with parents about their student's success
4. Covenants to holding family meetings (more than one) at different times to meet different family schedules.
5. Covenants to provide and safe learning environment
6. Covenants to provide information about School Board Meetings and Cancellation

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